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Chess

Aleksandra the Great!

Goryachkina wins Women's Candidates' with two rounds to spare!

ISSN 0964-6221

Vera Menchik - 75 years after the death of a great pioneer, Andrey Terekhov pays tribute

A New Initiative - Sean Marsh reports from the Teesside International Women's Invitational

Is Magnus Beatable? - Carlsen was once again in ominous form as he triumphed in Zagreb

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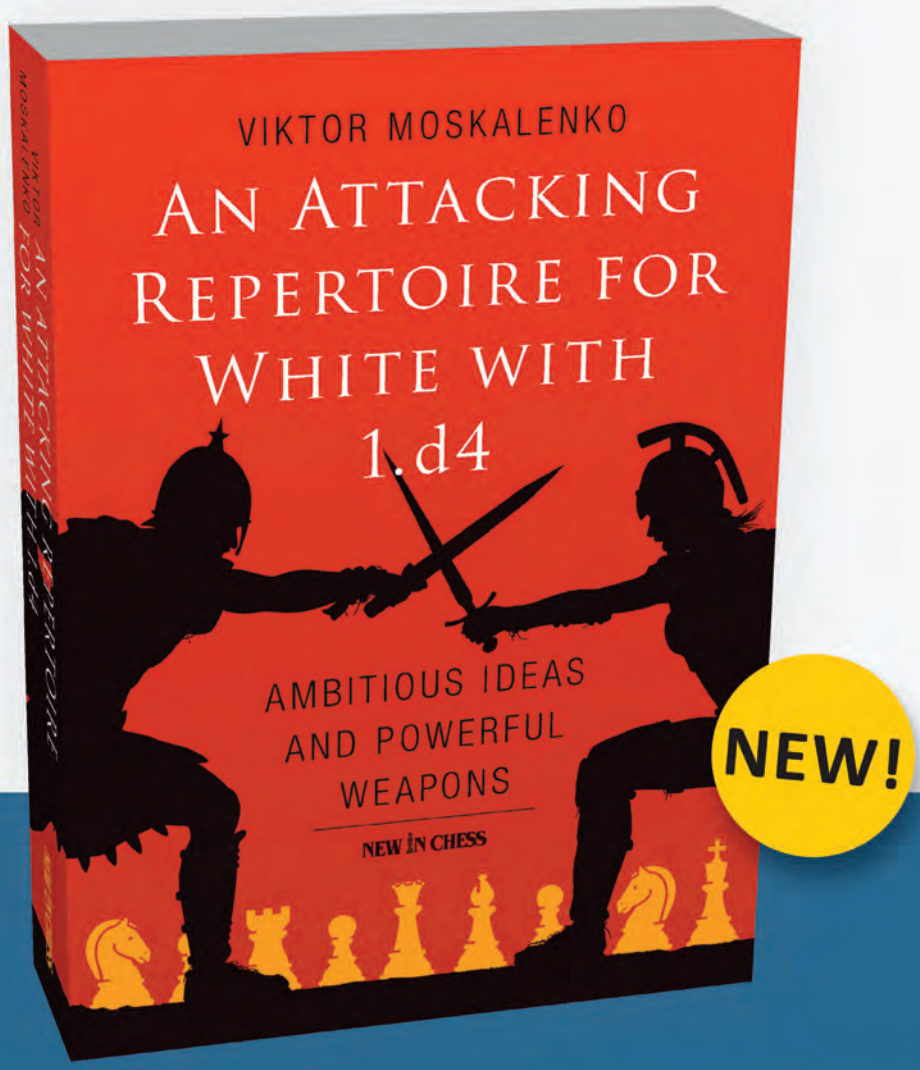

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

The 11th London Chess Classic – Organised by Chess in Schools and Communities

This is gradually falling into place, even if some details have yet to be confirmed. First, the dates for your diaries; the festival tournaments will begin on Friday, November 29th with the elite tournament beginning the day after. We will have two weekends at the LCC with play concluding on Sunday, December 8th.

Back by popular demand are the Super Rapid starting on the evening of Friday 6th December and the Super Blitz which will take place on the final Sunday. All events will be at Olympia. The website londonchessclassic.com will be activated in August.

Of course, there will also be a full programme of school events from Monday 2nd to Friday 6th December inclusive.

The 7th London Chess Conference

This will take place on November 30th and December 1st at the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, and the theme will be *Chess and Female Empowerment*. The gender imbalance is the biggest issue facing the game today and it's time this was the topic for the conference.

When I founded Chess in Schools and Communities in 2009 my idea was to teach chess in the classroom and in that way to ensure that the same number of girls learned to play as boys. While the charity also runs lots of after school clubs nowadays, the core activity remains classroom chess and you can see that this feeds into the end of year tournaments from the pictures here from recent CSC tournaments in Bristol and Liverpool.

Of course, another issue we have is keeping girls in the game after the age of 11 and this will doubtless be a topic of discussion at the conference. I'm delighted to reveal that the conference will be a joint venture between CSC, ChessPlus, ECF, ECU and FIDE – it's really great to have all these organisations working together. Keep up to date with developments at londonchessconference.com.

Carlsen Continues – The GOAT or 'just' a Beast?

The Carlsen wrecking ball continues to demolish everything in its path and an eighth straight tournament victory was inevitable after Ian Nepomniachtchi was crushed in the seventh round at the GCT second leg in Zagreb (see inside). The early leader, Nepo went into a tailspin as Carlsen set about defeating other players he had never before conquered in classical chess, including Ding Liren – a big win that one.

The champ was absolutely delighted afterwards, pointing out that Zagreb was a 12-player tournament with only elite players and he had never outclassed opposition that tough in such a fashion. Carlsen equalled his all-time high of 2882 and 2900 looks feasible again as his TPR was well over that. Carlsen's '+5' earned him maximum GCT points and $90,000.

Wesley So was second with a solid +3 and made a startling admission: "It feels like second place is already a victory whenever he [Carlsen] is playing right now, because he's like Bobby Fischer back in the 1970s or 1960s. Whenever he's playing in a championship, the others are just playing for the second place."

One player who used to be the champ's bête noire was crushed in the opening round. I liked Giri's tweet post event: "We just have to ride out the storm, he'll get old eventually." Carlsen is 28.

A.Giri-M.Carlsen
Zagreb 2019
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6

Already springing something of a surprise as Carlsen preferred 3...g6 against Caruana in their match, as well as subsequently.

4 ♗xc6 bxc6 5 d3 ♘e7

In this line the game often turns on

16 Bristol primary schools did battle at Bristol City Hall (left), where we see the city's mayor, Marvin Rees, in action against one of the top boards. Another impressive setting is St George's Hall, Liverpool (right), where another Chess in Schools and Communities tournament took place.

whether White can dominate the dark squares or Black can activate his light-squared bishop which will be unchallenged.

6 h4 h5 7 e5 d6!?

Brilliant psychology, as Black says to 'hell with the pawn structure, I want to get my pieces out'. This has only been played once before and was motivated by a desire to take Giri right out of his comfort zone, as Carlsen revealed afterwards. 7...♘g6 or 7...♘f5 have previously been automatic.

8 exd6 ♘g6

8...♘f5 is far from ridiculous either, when 9 ♘bd2 ♗xd6 10 b3 ♗e7 11 ♗b2 f6 was eventually won by Black in Motylev-Fedorov, European Individual Championship, Batumi 2018.

9 ♘fd2

Not a bad move, but the battle for the dark squares would be better served by simple development: 9 ♘bd2 ♗xd6 10 ♘c4 ♗e7 11 ♗d2 (or 11 ♕e2 ♗a6 12 ♗g5 f6 13 0-0-0!?), and if 11...♘xh4? (11...f6) 12 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 13 ♗a5 ♕f6 14 g3 ♗g5 15 f4 ♗h6 16 ♕xh5 is pretty much winning.

9...♗xd6

9...♘xh4? 10 ♘e4 is very strong, but Carlsen is not distracted by hanging pawns.

10 ♘c4 ♗e7 11 ♘c3 ♗a6

Giri had missed this and it seemed to engender a psychological collapse.

12 ♕f3 Getting sucked in. 12 g3 ♗xc4 13 dxc4 ♕xd1+ 14 ♘xd1 was still OK.

12...♗xc4 13 ♕xc6+ ♔f8 14 dxc4 ♘xh4 15 0-0

By no means bad, but Giri did not sense any danger. 15 ♗f4 or 15 ♕e4!? would have been more prudent.

15...♘f5 16 ♘e2?!

Giri seemed to be obsessed with preventing ...♘d4, but he might have allowed

Remember last autumn when we wondered if Fabiano might defeat Magnus and surpass him at the top of the rating list? The champ is now a whopping 2882, Fabiano still second, if on 2818.

16 ♖d1 ♘d4 17 ♕e4 f5 18 ♕d3 h4.

16...♖c8 17 ♕a4?

Now the queen will remain out of play, although if 17 ♕e4 g5.

17...♖c7! 18 ♗f4 ♖d7 19 c3?

Giri was so fixated about preventing ...♘d4, he ignores the rest of the board, but 19 ♘g3 ♘xg3 20 fxg3 h4 was already good for Black.

19...g5! 20 ♖ad1?

Another mistake, although Black is doing very well after 20 ♗h2 h4.

20...♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 ♕a8!

Brilliant, as the queen combines with the h-pawn and the rook.

22 ♗c7 h4 23 f3 h3 0-1

The white king is quite helpless. What a game.

Giri later took advantage of a demoralised Nepo.

I.Nepomniachtchi-A.Giri
Zagreb 2019
Sicilian Moscow

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♘d7 4 c3 ♘gf6 5 ♗d3 g6 6 ♗c2 ♗g7 7 d4 0-0 8 0-0 b5!

I love this move. The positional justification is not just to gain queenside space, as if Black can play ...e5 successfully, he will potentially be between two and four tempi up on a Closed Ruy Lopez position, since he will have played ...g6 and ...♗g7 in place of ...♗e7, ...♖e8, ...♗f8, ...g6 & ...♗g7 and not even bothered with ...a6.

Incidentally, White is a tempo down on a favourite club player's line, the Kopec System, developed by the late IM Danny Kopec who recommended 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 c3 and 4 ♗d3 followed by ♗c2. Bronstein once employed Kopec's idea: 1 e4 c5 ♘f3 d6 3 c3 ♘f6 4 ♗d3 g6 5 ♗c2 ♗g7 6 d4 0-0 7 0-0 ♘bd7 8 e5 dxe5 9 dxe5 ♘g4 10 e6 fxe6 11 ♘g5 ♘de5 12 f4 ♕xd1 13 ♗xd1 ♘xh2 14 ♔xh2 ♘d3 15 ♗b3 ♘xc1 16 ♖xc1 ♖xf4 17 ♘d2 ♗e5 18 ♔g1 h6 19 ♖e1 ♗d6 20 ♘ge4 ♔f7 21 ♘c4 1-0, Bronstein-Lomo, Gausdal 1994.

9 e5

A logical response, as if 9 ♖e1 e5!.

9...♘e8 10 e6 fxe6 11 ♘g5 ♘c7 12 dxc5 ♘xc5!

13 ♘xh7?!

Tempting, but wrong for deeply hidden reasons. Both 13 h4!? e5! 13 ♕g4 ♖f6 14 b4 ♘d7 15 ♕h4 ♘f8 16 a4 ♗b7 look comfortable for Black, though.

13...♔xh7 14 ♕h5+ ♔g8 15 ♗xg6 ♖f6 16 ♕h7+ ♔f8 17 ♗h6 ♖xg6!

Forced, but very good.

18 ♕xg6

Black loses his queen, but wins in the following line: 18 ♕h8+ ♔f7 19 ♕xd8 ♖xg2+! 20 ♔h1 ♗xh6 21 ♕xc7 ♖g6!. White is a queen for two pieces ahead, but he is being mated in slow motion after ...♗c8-b7 and ...♖a8-g8 followed by ...♗xf3+ or even ...♗h6-f4 and ...♖a8-h8 followed by ...♖xh2+: for example, 22 f3 ♗b7 (or 23 b4 ♗f4 24 bxc5 ♖h8 25 ♖f2 ♗xf3+!) 23 ♘a3 ♗f4 wins or 22 ♘a3 ♗b7+ 23 f3 ♗f4 24 ♖f2 ♘d3 25 ♖af1 ♖ag8 26 ♘xb5 ♘xf2+ 27 ♖xf2 ♖g1#.

18...♗xh6 19 ♕xh6+ ♔e8 20 b4

20 ♘d2 ♔d7 21 ♘b3 ♘xb3 22 axb3 ♗b7 is also good for Black.

20...♘a4 21 ♘a3 ♔d7!

The king is safe here, but not 21...♘xc3?? 22 ♕h8+ ♔d7 23 ♕xc3. White now tries to open files for his rooks, but Black keeps the c-file closed and gradually the minor pieces dominate.

22 c4 bxc4 23 ♘xc4 ♗a6 24 ♖ac1 ♘b6 25 ♘xb6+ axb6 26 ♖fe1 ♗b7 27 ♕e3 b5! 28 a3 ♗d5!

The bishop anchors Black's position and is about to close the door on the white rooks.

29 ♖c3 ♕g8 30 ♕h3 ♕g7 31 ♖ec1 ♗c4 32 ♖e1

If 32 ♖g3 ♕b2 and even heading for the endgame does not help: 32 ♕g3 ♕d4 33 ♕e3 ♕xe3 34 ♖xe3 ♘d5 35 ♖f3 e5.

32...♕d4 The decisive invasion.

33 ♖f3 ♕d2 34 ♖b1 ♘d5 35 ♕g3 ♗e2 36 ♖fb3 ♗d1! 0-1

World Prison Internet Championship

CSC has been developing a prisons programme which aims to build on the fantastic work by our columnist Carl Portman who has been ploughing a lone furrow in this area for many years. Carl visits prisons for a day and writes a regular column in the national prisons newspaper *Inside Times*. The CSC programme involves running a weekly chess club and giving chess sets to prisoners.

Mikhail Koneman, who runs chess lessons at Cook County jail in Chicago, is building on his annual match with a prison in Moscow by organising a world championship. Twelve countries have signed up including England. The practical problems are huge and I am wrestling with them now with the CSC Prisons Coordinator Peter Sullivan.

If you see a prison from the UK competing online on August 5th and 6th on chess.com then you'll know that we've been successful.

The Outing of Rausis

With the kind of fanfare usually reserved for celebrity scandals, the picture of GM Igors Rausis sitting fully clothed on the toilet, phone in hand and eyes on the screen mid-game at the Strasbourg Open appeared on scores of mainstream news outlets and websites. Once it's been on MailOnline, it's well and truly out there. The Latvian GM, who plays under the Czech flag nowadays had 'achieved' a remarkable run of over 100 games unbeaten.

His rating had held steady from 2003-2013 at around 2500 and then began to rise thanks to scores of victories over relatively weak players many of which only yielded 0.8 points.

When he got into the world's top-100, and at 2686 looked set to join the 2700 club, suspicions were aroused and some people voiced concern. Looking back on it it's noticeable that his Rapid and Blitz ratings did not move much part from his Blitz rating plummeting last year. What happened next is rather unclear, other than we know the organisers were on their guard at Strasbourg and someone out there took the damning picture. Rausis promptly fessed up in writing.

While one less cheat is a very good thing, of course, it was dispiriting, and I say this as someone who is also 58 years old, to see that the idea that someone out there was defying their age was just a mirage. There was subsequently a slightly unedifying spectacle of FIDE officials trying to take credit for the 'catch' when subsequent statements from the tournament organisers rather suggested there had been no planned investigation. I guess all will be revealed in due course and I hope the FIDE Ethics Commission hand out a life ban.

It had long been suspected and finally GM Igors Rausis has been caught cheating in Strasbourg, visiting the cubicle to consult his phone. Next up the FIDE Ethics Commission.

60 Seconds with...

IM Adam Hunt

Born: 21st October 1980, Oxford.

Place of residence: Ipswich.

Occupation: Head of Chess at Woodbridge School.

Enjoyable? Fantastic. A wonderful school in a beautiful setting in Suffolk teaching the game I love. What could be better?

And home life? Happily married as of the 12th July this year.

But sometimes good to escape to: For me, somewhere far away. Last year the Maldives were very special. India, Australia and New Zealand also stand out.

Sports played or followed: Football, golf, swimming and basketball, while I'm a big Liverpool FC fan.

A favourite novel? *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts.

Piece of music? I'm pretty flexible on music and listen to a lot of different things. A bit of Credence Clearwater Revival perhaps? The 'Ashokan Farewell' by Jay Ungar is up there too.

Film or TV series? We are hooked on *Masterchef* whenever it's on.

What's the best thing about playing chess? Its difficulty and enormous richness.

And the worst? Losing a long game thanks to a bad move. It's difficult sometimes!

Your best move? I genuinely can't think of any stand-out moves or combinations I have played. I was proud of drawing with Mickey Adams in the 2011 British Championships, but that was a bit of a backs-to-the-wall defensive job.

But less memorable than your worst move? Not finding the decisive 22 ♖g5! against Yifan Hou at Gibraltar in 2012 was annoying. I was heading in the right direction towards 2500 at the time, while Yifan went on to have a brilliant tournament result.

A.Hunt-Hou Yifan
Gibraltar 2012

22 h5? g5 23 ♗e3 f4 24 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 25 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 26 ♕xg5 ♘e6 27 ♕g2 ♗d7 28 ♖g1 ♕b6 0-1

And a highly memorable opponent? Vasily Ivanchuk at the 2015 European Club Cup in Skopje. The post mortem after the game was amazing.

A.Hunt-V.Ivanchuk
Blackthorne Russia vs Alkaloid
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♘f3 ♗b4 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♗d2 0–0 9 ♗d3 ♘c6 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♖e1 ♗f6 12 ♘e4 ♗xd4 13 ♘eg5 g6 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

15 ♘xh7 ♔xh7 16 ♕h5+ ♔g8 17 ♗xg6 ♘f6 18 ♕h6 fxg6 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 20 ♗c3 ♘f3+ 21 ♔h1 ♘xe1 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 ♕g6+ ♔h8 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 ♕g6+ ♔h8 26 ♕h6+ ♔g8 ½-½

Favourite game of all time? I don't really have one I'm afraid. I very much admire the way that Magnus Carlsen plays chess to the end. I like some of the old games, such as Capablanca-Tartakower, New York 1924, for their instructiveness.

The best three chess books: For teaching young beginners, *Winning Chess Puzzles for Kids* by Jeff Coakley, while I enjoyed reading David Bronstein's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. I also enjoyed writing my own book for Everyman, *Chess Strategy: Move by Move*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? It's probably a bit early to say, but I think the signs are promising.

Or the ECF? It's hard for them as they are mostly volunteers. I know how much time a job like that requires to really do well from my experiences of trying to promote junior chess in Suffolk.

Any advice for either? More should be done to promote chess in schools and at junior level, particularly in the UK.

Can chess make one happy? Yes of course, but the lows for me are worse than the highs.

A tip please for the club player: I think a lot of club players are overly pessimistic in their thoughts on a position. Try to keep hold of the positives in your position and train yourself to calculate better!

Ed. - We're delighted to say that Adam will be commentating alongside Danny Gormally at this year's British Championships. You'll be able to watch via www.twitch.tv/gingergm.

Havana Good Time!

Vassily Ivanchuk returned to the Capablanca Memorial, watched by IM Jose L. Vilela

The 54th edition of the Capablanca Memorial took place in Havana. The venue was once again the Habana Libre Hotel, with the total number of participants having grown in recent years to over 200.

The Elite Group gathered an interesting field, with several young fighting players and the presence for the tenth time of Vassily Ivanchuk. As well as the Ukrainian legend, there was Adhiban Baskaran from India, David Anton Guijarro from Spain, Samuel Sevian from the USA, and the Cubans Yuri Gonzalez and Carlos Daniel Albornoz.

Prior to the tournament it was difficult to select a favourite, as seven-time Capablanca Memorial winner Ivanchuk had been in poor form in Saint Louis, falling below the 2700 barrier for first time in many years. On the other hand, Adhiban had played wonderfully in the World Team Championship, climbing to 2701 on the FIDE rating list, while Anton Guijarro had won a strong Challengers section in Prague and immediately after performed excellently too at the European Individual Championship in Skopje.

In addition to that trio, Sevian had played very well in the World Team Championship, while his fifth place in the U.S. Championship, held just before Capablanca Memorial, was a remarkable performance, giving ground only to four of the world's best players. Just the two Cuban representatives seemed unlikely to taste tournament victory as their ratings were under 2600.

The competition began well for Sevian, who won in the opening round against Albornoz. Then in the second round Ivanchuk and Adhiban joined the lead, after defeating Gonzalez and Albornoz respectively.

B.Adhiban-C.Albornoz Cabrera
Round 2
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 e3 c5 5 d4 dxc4 6 ♗xc4 a6 7 0-0 b5 8 ♗b3 ♗b7 9 e4!?

9 ♕e2 is the most common choice. The text has though been tried in quite a number of games, sacrificing the e-pawn.

9...♘xe4?

Albornoz thought for several minutes before taking this decision, as the position on the board was new for him. He based it on a calculation that contained a flaw at the end. The best and most common response, as well as one which is quite typical of the QGA is 9...cxd4 and after 10 ♘xd4 either 10...♘c6 or 10...♘bd7 with perfectly reasonable play. Instead, 9...b4?! would allow 10 ♗a4+! when after 10...♘bd7 11 ♘e2 (11 e5 is also worth considering), grabbing with 11...♗xe4 gives White a dangerous initiative after 12 ♘e5.

10 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♖e1 ♗d5 12 dxc5 ♗xb3 13 ♕xb3 ♘d7

The sequence Albornoz had calculated ended with 13...♗xc5 when he had initially assessed that Black was doing OK. Only now did he realise that he had failed to foresee 14 ♕c3! with a double attack on c5 and g7. Even if Black counterattacks with 14...♕b6, after 15 ♕xg7 ♗xf2+ 16 ♔h1 ♖f8 17 ♗h6 ♘d7 18 ♖e2 White has a large advantage. As such, Albornoz took another road, but the damage had already been done.

14 ♗g5

White's lead in development becomes a very large one indeed.

14...♘xc5 15 ♕c3! ♕d3 16 ♕a5! f6 17 ♖ad1 ♕f5

The picture on the board is eloquent: White's army is completely mobilised while Black suffers from a serious lack of development.

18 ♕c7! ♗e7 19 ♘d4! ♕xg5 20 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♕c6+!

The final finesse, preventing Black from castling.

21...♔f7 22 ♕xe6+ ♔g6 23 ♖d5 1-0

The next day Adhiban was himself turned over by Sevian, while Ivanchuk defeated Albornoz, so both Sevian and Ivanchuk were tying for first place with '+2'. This state of affairs remained unaltered for two more rounds ahead of the rest day.

That day supplied rest for the mind, but was nevertheless an active day. In the morning there was a book launch for a work devoted to the memory of the late Cuban GM Guillermo Garcia and in the afternoon a visit to Jose Raul Capablanca's grave to honour the great Cuban, which was followed by a football match between two teams of tournament participants, one of foreign players and one of Cubans. Incidentally, the international selection won 4-1, with Argentinean GM Leandro Krysa scoring two goals for his team.

The sixth round produced the first real upset when Albornoz bounced back to form by defeating Sevian with the black pieces.

S.Sevian-C.Albornoz Cabrera
Round 6
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 d6 4 0-0 ♗d7 5 ♖e1 ♘f6 6 c3 a6 7 ♗c4!?

A relatively rare retreat, compared to the much more frequent alternatives 7 ♗f1, 7 ♗a4 and 7 ♗xc6, but 7 ♗c4 has been used by no lesser players than Gawain Jones and David Howell.

7...♗g4 8 d4 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 g6

This move can be considered a new one at a high level. More common have been 9...e6 and 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 e5 (or 10...d5).

10 d5 ♘e5 11 ♗e2

Eventually White wants to eject the knight from e5 with f3-f4.

11...g5!?

A drastic measure, but positionally justified. Tactically too as 12 ♗xg5 ♖g8 13 f4 h6 (or the engine's suggestion of 13...♕d7) gives Black counterplay. Albornoz weakens his kingside, but the black king does not have any intention of venturing to this side of the board.

12 ♔h1 h6 13 f4 gxf4 14 ♗xf4 h5

Aimed at playing ...♗h6, and most certainly not 14...♘xe4? 15 ♕a4+.

15 ♖g1 ♗h6 16 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 17 ♘d2 ♕d7

Black gets ready to castle queenside.

18 f3

18 f4 ♘eg4 19 ♕f1 0-0-0 leads to a very complicated position: White has the better control of the centre, but his king is definitely less secure than Black's.

18...♖g6 19 ♖xg6 ♘xg6 20 ♗f1 ♕c7 21 a4 e6

21...0-0-0 was also perfectly playable.

22 ♘c4

22 dxe6 fxe6 23 ♘c4 does not lead anywhere after 23...0-0-0.

22...exd5 23 exd5 0-0-0

(See diagram at top of next column)

The position seems to be easier to play with Black than with White. The white king will be a permanent source of worry, whereas Black's king position is significantly safer. Over the next few moves both sides manoeuvre with attacking intent.

24 a5 ♔b8 25 b4 ♘e5 26 ♖c1

Black would have been clearly for choice after 26 ♘xe5 dxe5 27 c4 cxb4, but 26 b5!? was worth consideration too.

26...♘fd7 27 ♘e3 ♖g8 28 ♗h3 ♘f6 29 ♕f1 ♖e8 30 ♗f5 ♘g6 31 ♘c4 ♘f4!

Now the d-pawn will fall.

32 ♗e4 ♕e7!

32...♘xe4 33 fxe4 ♖xe4 34 ♘b6! would allow White to breathe, despite being a pawn down, whereas after the text 33...♘xe4 is a really powerful threat.

33 ♘d2 ♘6xd5 34 bxc5 dxc5 35 ♖b1 f5!

A strong blow to deflect the white bishop, as Black allows White no respite.

36 ♗xd5

36 ♗xf5? ♘e3 37 ♕xa6 ♘xf5 is winning for Black.

36...♘xd5 37 ♕d3

37 ♕xa6? loses to more than one move, with 37...♘xc3 being the strongest.

37...♕e6!

A quiet, consolidating move, defending everything.

38 ♕c4 ♕d6 39 ♘b3

39...♘xc3!!

A nice tactical blow.

40 ♖g1

Under time pressure White fails to find the best way to resist, namely 40 ♕xc3 ♖e2 41 ♕h8+ ♔a7 42 ♕xh5 (the only way to stop the mate) 42...♕d3! when Black keeps a clear advantage, but White has some hope of creating counterplay.

40...♘e2 41 ♖b1 ♕c6 42 ♖f1 ♖e5 43 ♖f2 ♕d6 44 ♕c2 ♘d4 45 ♕c4 ♖e1+ 46 ♔g2 ♕g6+ 47 ♔h3 ♖e3! 0-1

With the terrible threat of 48...♕g4#, so White resigned.

The two other games of the sixth round were drawn, so Ivanchuk had seized a small lead. The next day saw him increase his advantage to a full point when he beat Yuri Gonzalez with the black pieces in another Sicilian Rossolimo, while the other games ended peacefully. When in the eighth round Ivanchuk defeated Albornoz, it seemed that, with two rounds to go, the fate of the tournament had been decided.

Round 8 also saw Sevian and Baskaran draw, while Anton Guijarro defeated Yuri Gonzalez in an energetic game with the white pieces. This win catapulted the young Spaniard into sole second place with '+2', while Sevian was relegated to third place with '+1'.

And then the surprising ninth round occurred, where Sevian faced Ivanchuk with the white pieces.

S.Sevian-V.Ivanchuk
Round 9
Sicilian Four Knights

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♘e4 ♕c7 9 f4 ♕a5+

A less trodden path than 9...♕b6.

10 ♗d2 ♕b6 11 ♗d3

The main idea behind the insertion of ...♕a5+ is that now 11 c4 runs into 11...♕d4! (something that is not possible with the white bishop on c1).

11...♖b8

A move only seen before in Lobron-Svidler, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000, although Black doesn't rush to grab b2.

12 ♕e2 ♘b4

Svidler had played 12...♗e7.

13 ♗e3 ♘xd3+ 14 ♕xd3 ♕a5+

The sensible choice, although 14...♕xb2!? 15 0-0 ♕a3 was by no means impossible.

15 ♗d2 ♕d5 16 b3 ♕xd3 17 cxd3

The endgame which has arisen can be evaluated as approximately balanced.

17...♗e7 18 ♗e3

White's main strategic idea to fight for an advantage is to exchange the dark-squared bishops in order to weaken Black's dark squares and so reach a position with a knight superior to Black's light-squared bishop.

18...f5 19 ♘d2 ♗a6 20 ♔e2 ♖b7 21 ♖ac1 ♔f7 22 ♗c5 ♖b5 23 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 24 h4 ♖d5 25 ♖c3 ♖b8 26 ♔e3 c5?!

A decision of great responsibility, as Black's rook might become isolated from his other pieces.

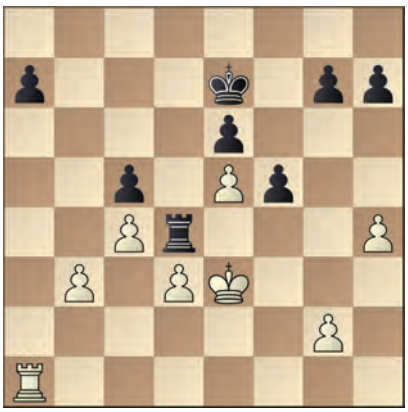
27 ♘c4! ♗xc4 28 bxc4! ♖d4

Black's idea to bring the rook back to life is an opportune ...d6 break, but after...

29 ♖b3! ♖xb3 30 axb3 d6 31 ♖a1!

...it is White who has the advantage.

31...dxe5 32 fxe5



An important moment has arisen. Black is under pressure and has to decide between defending his queenside pawns or unleashing a sequence of consecutive captures giving rise to a frenetic pawn race by both sides. The position is very complex and it would be a very hard task to reach a definitive conclusion on it.

The alternative 32 ♖xa7+? was not to be recommended though, as 32...♔f6 33 fxe5+ (or 33 g3 e4) 33...♔xe5 gives Black good counterplay.

32...♖d7

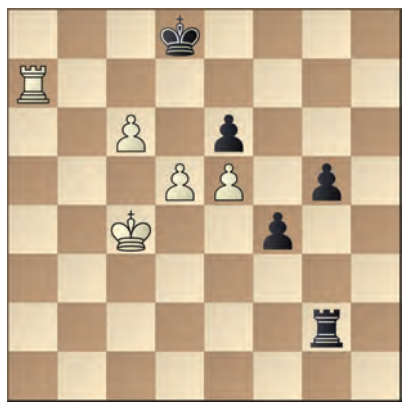
Ivanchuk opts for the quieter path.

I will give some analysis on the alternative of capturing pawns, without any aspiration of accurately reaching the final truth, just to show the complexity of the endgame: 32...♖xh4 33 ♖xa7+ ♔f8 34 ♖c7 ♖g4 35 ♖xc5 (White could also try to defend the g-pawn: 35 ♔f3 ♖d4 36 ♔e2 ♖g4 37 ♔f2 ♖f4+ 38 ♔g1 ♖d4 39 ♖xc5 ♖xd3 40 b4 ♖b3 41 b5 g5 42 ♖c6 ♔f7 43 b6 g4 44 c5 f4 45 ♖c7+ ♔g6 46 b7 ♖b1+ 47 ♔f2 ♖b2+ 48 ♔e1 ♖b1+ 49 ♔e2 ♖b2+ 50 ♔d3 f3 51 gxf3 g3 52 c6 g2 53 ♖c8 ♔g7 54 ♖g8+ ♔xg8 55 c7 g1♕ 56 b8♕+ ♖xb8 57 cxb8♕+ with equality) 35...♖xg2 36 b4 g5 37 b5 ♖b2 38 ♖c7 h5 39 ♖h7 h4 40 ♖h5 g4 41 ♖xh4 ♔g7 42 ♖h1 ♔g6 43 ♖h8 ♔g5 and 12 moves after the start of the analysis there is not yet certainty about the final result. As such, perhaps it would be sensible to say that this sharp path would have given Black the best practical chances.

33 ♖a6 ♖c7 34 ♔d2

White goes for the plan of ♔c3 followed by b3-b4. Another plan would have been 34 d4!?.

34...g6 35 ♔c3 h6 36 b4 cxb4+ 37 ♔xb4 ♖d7 38 ♔c3 g5 39 hxg5 hxg5 40 d4 f4 41 c5 ♖b7 42 ♔c4 ♖b2 43 ♖xa7+ ♔d8 44 c6 ♖xg2 45 d5!



In the case of 45...exd5+, 46 ♔c5! (46 ♔xd5? gives Black the possibility of vertical checks, against which there is no cover, whereas now the black d-pawn serves to shelter to White's king when it comes to d6) 46...f3 47 ♔d6 wins, as does 45...♖c2+ 46 ♔d3 ♖c5 47 ♖a8+ ♔c7 48 d6+!.

45...♖d2 46 c7+ ♔c8 47 d6 ♖c2+ 48 ♔d3 1-0

Neither player looks too concerned at the start, but Vassily Ivanchuk (left) and Baskaran Adhiban (right) would produce an epic final-round encounter at the Capablanca Memorial.

And so the scene was set for the final, decisive round, with Ivanchuk and Anton Guijarro tied for first and Sevian trailing by half a point. The pairings: Ivanchuk-Adhiban, Anton-Albornoz and Gonzalez-Sevian. Apparently the Spaniard had the brightest perspective, but a forecast is one thing and reality often a different thing entirely.

V.Ivanchuk-B.Adhiban
Round 10
Modern Defence

1 d4 d6 2 e4 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 c5 5 ♘ge2

5 d5 is more popular, but the text is, of course, perfectly sound.

5...♘c6!? 6 d5 ♘a5

A move first played by the Dutch IM Barendregt against Eliskases at Beverwijk 1959.

7 ♖b1 ♘f6

Of course, it was impossible to take on c4 due to the queen check on a4.

8 ♘g3 0-0 9 ♗e2 e6

Driving the game into a Modern Benoni type of position.

10 0-0 exd5 11 cxd5 a6 12 b4

Ivanchuk himself, talking to GM Pablo Zarnicki after the game, was not overly convinced about the strength of this plan.

12...♘d7 13 ♕d2 cxb4 14 ♘d1

14 ♖xb4 b5 is also quite unclear.

14...h5

14...♘c5 seems the most natural move. After 15 ♖xb4 (or 15 ♕xb4) 15...b5 a complex situation arises, which might be qualified as an unorthodox Benoni-type position.

15 ♗xh5!?

This was quite a surprise for Black, I dare say. Ivanchuk decides on a piece sacrifice the outcome of which is far from clear.

15...♘c4

Adhiban does not accept the challenge, but rather plays for counterplay and activity. After 15...gxh5 16 ♘xh5, while the situation is extremely unclear, there should be no doubt that White has compensation for his piece, as he obtains two pawns and a quite insecure position for the black king.

16 ♕xb4 b5 17 ♗e2 ♘c5

17...a5 was an interesting option, the main idea being 18 ♕xb5 ♖b8 with unclear consequences, although White is not forced to capture on b5 and can also retreat his queen.

18 ♗xc4 bxc4 19 ♗b2

After 19 ♕xc4 ♗d7, despite being two pawns down, Black has compensation due to the superior activity of his pieces: for instance, 20 ♘c3 ♖c8 21 ♘ce2 ♗b5.

19...♘d3 20 ♕a3

20 ♕xc4 ♘xb2 21 ♘xb2 ♗d7 would give Black some compensation for his two pawns, but objectively it was the correct continuation. Ivanchuk's idea is based on the pressure on d6 and the eventual possibility of bringing a knight to c6, but the passed pawn that appears on c3 is a dangerous force to be reckoned with.

20...♘xb2 21 ♘xb2 c3 22 ♘c4

22...♕c7

Rising American star Sam Sevian was the only player to defeat Ivanchuk and finished on '+3'.

22...a5 with the idea of bringing the bishop to a6 is the preference of *Stockfish*. In that case eliminating Black's bishop by 23 ♘b6 (winning a second pawn is bad: 23 ♕xd6? ♕xd6 24 ♘xd6 ♗a6 is very disadvantageous and 23 ♘xd6 ♗a6 is also better for Black) 23...♖b8 24 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 only leads to an advantage for Black given his well-supported, advanced passed pawn.

23 ♘a5 ♖b8 24 ♖xb8 ♕xb8 25 ♘c6 ♕b5

The more aggressive 25...♕b2 also deserved careful attention.

26 ♕xd6 c2 This threatens ...♕xf1+.

27 ♕c7! ♗f6

Wisely side-stepping 27...♕xf1+? 28 ♘xf1 c1♕ 29 ♘e7+.

28 ♘a7

28...♕b7?

The wrong square. After 28...♕d7! 29 ♕c5! (and not 29 ♕xd7? ♗xd7, since Black wins after 30 ♖c1 ♗a4 or 30 ♘c6 ♗xc6 31 dxc6 ♖c8) 29...♗e7 30 ♕e3 ♕a4! Black would have retained good counterplay with everything to play for.

29 ♕xb7 ♗xb7 30 ♖c1

The passed pawn falls and with it the game.

30...♗g5 31 ♖xc2 f5 32 ♖c7 ♗a8 33 ♘c6 ♗f4 34 ♖a7 ♗xc6 35 dxc6 ♖e8 36 ♖xa6 fxe4 37 ♖a4 1-0

In parallel with the development of Ivanchuk's game, Anton Guijarro had obtained a positional advantage in a queenless middlegame arising from an English Opening.

D.Anton Guijarro-
C.Albornoz Cabrera
Round 10

White's position is preferable, mainly due to his better pawn structure and more space, but there is still a long fight ahead, of course.

18...♔f7 19 g4

An aggressive choice, very much in keeping with Anton's enterprising style.

19...d6 20 ♖f3

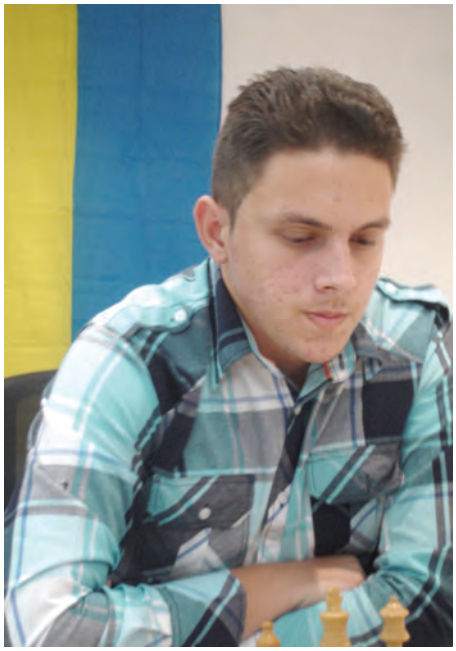
Very direct, threatening g4-g5, but there was a stronger continuation: 20 ♖ae1! e5 (or 20...♖ae8 21 g5 ♘d7 22 ♘e4 ♔e7 23 c5!) 21 f4! exf4 22 ♖e7+ ♔f8 23 g5 with a very powerful initiative.

20...h6 21 ♘e4 ♖ad8?!

Correct was 21...♔e7. Then White had a couple of tactical possibilities, but in all cases his advantage would be smaller than in the game: 22 c5 (22 ♘xd6 ♔xd6 23 c5+ ♔xc5 24 ♗xa6 is also an edge) 22...♘xe4 (22...♗xd3!?) 23 cxd6+ ♔xd6 24 ♗xa6 and White is slightly for choice.

22 g5! hxg5 23 ♘xg5+ ♔e7 24 ♖e1 e5 25 c5!

The key breakthrough, undermining Black's



Carlos Albornoz Cabrera defended very well to hold David Anton Guijarro in the final round and so deny the Spaniard a share of first.

structure.

25...♗xd3 26 ♖xd3 ♘d5 27 cxd6+ ♖xd6

27...♔xd6? 28 ♘f7+ wins.

28 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 29 ♖a3 ♖g6

29...♖a8 was likely a superior defence, as after the text there was a possible combination: 30 ♖xd5+! (30 ♖xa7+ ♔d6 is much less attractive) 30...cxd5 31 ♖xa7+ ♔c8 (31...♔d6? 32 ♖a6+ wins) 32 ♖a8+ ♔b7 33 ♖xh8 ♖xg5+ 34 ♔f1 when, two pawns ahead, it seems White should be able to convert the advantage. Initially it was a mystery to this annotator why the Spaniard did not play this way, but when I asked him, he confessed he had simply overlooked it.

30 ♔h2 ♖a8 31 ♘e4 a5 32 ♖f3 ♔c7 33 ♘c3

Maybe 33 ♖g3!?.

33...♘xc3 34 ♖xc3 ♖b8 35 ♖c2 ♔b6

Winning such a rook endgame is no easy task. Black is not only very active, but it is a challenge for White to create a passed pawn on the king's flank.

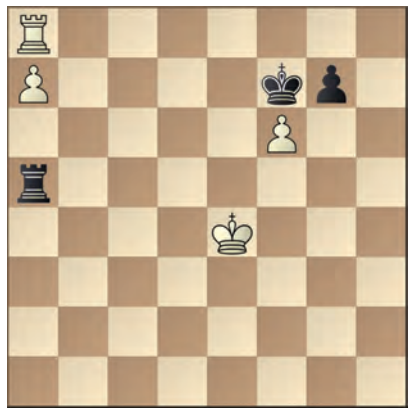
36 ♖e3 ♖f8 37 ♖b3+ ♔c7 38 ♖g3 ♖xg3 39 ♔xg3 ♔d6 40 ♔g4 ♔e7 41 f4 ♖b8 42 ♔g5 ♔f7 43 ♔f5 ♖b4 44 ♔e5 ♔e7 45 a3 ♖b5+ 46 ♔d4 ♖d5+ 47 ♔e4 ♖b5 48 h4 ♔f7 49 ♔f3 ♖b3+ 50 ♔g4 ♖b6 51 ♖d2 ♔f6 52 h5 a4 53 ♖c2 ♔f7 54 ♔g5 ♖b5+ 55 ♔h4 ♖b6 56 ♔g4 ♔e7 57 ♔f5 ♔f7 58 ♔e5 ♔e7 59 ♔d4 ♖b5 60 ♖xc6 ♖xb2 61 ♖a6 ♖b5 62 ♖xa4 ♖xh5

Finally White has obtained a passed pawn on the queenside, but many pawns have disappeared in the process and Black remains active.

63 ♖a7+ ♔f6 64 ♖a6+ ♔f7 65 a4 ♖f5

65...g5! was simpler, as 66 ♖a5 ♖h4! draws.

66 ♔e4 ♖c5 67 a5 ♖b5 68 ♖a7+ ♔f6 69 ♖a8 ♔f7 70 a6 ♖a5 71 f5 ♔f6 72 a7 ♔f7 73 f6



A last try. Black cannot capture this pawn with any piece (if 73...gxf6? 74 ♖h8 or 73...♔xf6? 74 ♖f8+), but he can quietly wait for White to take on g7.

73...♖a1 74 ♔d5 ♖d1+ 75 ♔c4 ♖c1+ 76 ♔b3 ♖a1 77 ♔b2 ♖a6 78 ♔b3 ♖a1 79 ♔b2 ½-½

White has no way to progress, so a draw was agreed.

And so in the end it was Vassily Ivanchuk who raised the victor's trophy, finishing with 7/10, while increasing his record number of Capablanca Memorial triumphs to eight. Additionally, the 14 Elo points he gained put him firmly back on the road to the 2700 club, where he has belonged for so many years.

The third game of the final round, Gonzalez-Sevian, ended up with a defeat for the Cuban player, as Sevian reached '+3' to tie with Anton Guijarro for second place in the tournament.

The Open had a record entry this year with 218 participants, of which many were titled players: 16 GMs, 31 IMs, 6 WGMs, 6 WIMs, and numerous FMs, WFMs, etc. It witnessed, as usual for such an event, a very tough fight for the leading positions, with more than one change of leader. After the first half of the tournament, GM Isam Ortiz, a member of the Cuban national team, occupied first place together with his compatriot IM Luis Aguero Jimenez on 4½/5.

Ortiz took the sole lead in the next round, when he defeated Aguero with the black pieces, but his joy did not last for long, as in the next round the second seed GM Omar Almeida defeated him with the black pieces in a rather long and tough fight. The new lone leader, Almeida, managed to keep his half-point lead in the eighth round, by drawing his game with the Canadian GM Bator Sambuev, as none of his immediate pursuers could win that day.

The ninth round, however, just as in the Elite Group, dramatically changed the picture. The young IM Arnaldo Fernandez de la Vara had the white pieces against Almeida, but was not able to make good use of the initial plus, as his opponent equalised and went on to put some pressure on White in a queenless middlegame. And then the unlikely happened. Despite having even more time on the clock than his adversary, Almeida lost the thread. A few careless moves allowed White first to equalise, and then to obtain an advantage that turned into a decisive one some moves later. At the end of the game, Almeida could barely believe what had happened. Meanwhile three other players on 6/8 won their respective games, including a very energetic victory for Ortiz.

I.Ortiz-B.Sambuev

Round 9

Sicilian Rossolimo

1 ♘f3 c5 2 e4 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6 4 0-0 ♘ge7 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 7 ♕xd4 a6 8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 ♕c3

From this square the queen keeps an eye on g7, making it difficult for Black to develop his kingside.

9...d6

This move is not found in the databases. 9...b5 and 9...♕f6 are more common options.

10 ♘d2 ♗d7 11 ♕g3

As apparently Black had the intention of playing ...♖c8 to create a vis-à-vis with the queen on the c-file, White removes the queen to a more stable position, from where it touches g7, as well as still d6.

11...b5 12 ♘f3 e5

The engine's suggestion of 12...♕f6 seems sensible as by protecting the g-pawn it prepares ...♗e7 and in some cases the queen can go to g6.

13 c4

An energetic break, intending to open the position as much as possible, given White's

lead in development.

13...♕b8 14 ♗e3 g6 15 ♖fd1 ♗e7 16 ♖ac1

Completing the full mobilisation of his forces, and now if 16...0-0 17 c5! or 16...♕b7 17 c5! dxc5 18 ♘xe5.

16...f6 17 h4! ♕b7 18 h5 ♔f7

In the case of 18...g5 the weakening of the light squares can be exploited by 19 ♘h2 with the idea of ♗g4. Other interesting alternatives mentioned by the engine are 19 h6 and even the sacrifice 19 ♘h4.

19 ♘h2 f5 20 f4

20 c5 was also strong as the fork is not really a threat: 20...f4 21 ♗xf4 exf4 22 ♕xf4+ ♔g8 23 cxd6 and White has an undeniable advantage with three pawns for the piece and Black's army so badly coordinated.

20...♖ag8 21 ♕f2 ♔e8 22 c5 exf4 23 ♗xf4 dxc5 24 exf5 ♖f8 25 ♗d6 ♗xd6 26 ♖xd6 ♖xf5 27 ♗f3 ♕c7 28 ♕d2 ♖hf8 29 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 30 ♖e1+ ♔f7 31 hxg6+ ♔g8

31...hxg6 32 ♘g4 is winning for White (note the double threat of ♘h6+ and ♘e5+).

32 ♘g4 ♖f4

33 gxh7+

Immediately decisive would have been 33 ♘h6+!, and if 33...♔g7 34 ♕c3+ ♖d4 35 ♖xd4 cxd4 36 ♕xd4+ ♔xh6 37 ♕h4+ ♔xg6 38 ♕g4+ ♔f6 39 ♖f1+ ♔e7 40 ♕g7+ and wins. The other point is that now after 33...♔h8 34 ♕c3+ ♕g7 there would not even be a queen exchange, but rather the lovely 35 ♖e7!! ♕xc3 36 ♖xh7#.

33...♔h8

33...♕xh7 34 ♘h6+ ♔h8 35 ♖xc6 is all over, as is 33...♔xh7 34 ♕d3+ ♔h8 35 ♖h6+ ♔g8 36 ♖g6+.

34 ♕c3+ ♕g7 35 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 36 ♖e7+ ♔h8 37 ♘e5

Despite the simplification, White has retained a big advantage.

37...♗e4 38 ♖xa6 ♖f1+ 39 ♔h2 ♖1f2 40 ♖g6 ♖xb2 41 ♖g4 ♖ff2

In time trouble Sambuev allows a mate, but there was no hope anyway, as shown by 41...♗b1 42 ♖eg7 ♗xh7 43 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 44 ♖xf7 ♗b1 45 ♖f8+ ♔h7 46 ♖f3 and 41...♗xh7 42 ♖h4.

42 ♖g8# 1-0

The scenario before the tenth and final round was that four players were tied on 7/9, including only one GM (Ortiz), as opposed to three IMs (Fernandez de la Vara, William Hernandez and Michel Diaz Perez). The pairings: Fernandez de la Vara-Ortiz and Diaz Perez-Hernandez. As Ortiz and Fernandez de la Vara had the best tie-breaks, attention focussed on the top board which saw a hard-fought encounter.

F.de la Vara-I.Ortiz Suarez
Round 10

45...♔f5?

A natural reaction, but a serious mistake as time pressure took its toll. 45...♔f7 or 45...♔g7 was correct.

46 g4+!

A nice petite combinaison, as Capablanca would have said, simplifying to a winning knight endgame.

46...hxg4 47 ♖f6+! ♔xf6 48 ♘xg4+ ♔f5 49 ♘xe3+ ♔e4 50 ♔f2 g4 51 d6! g3+ 52 ♔xg3! ♔e5

52...♔xe3 53 d7 ♘c6 54 a4 ♔e4 55 a5 ♔e5 56 a6 ♔d6 57 a7 is also winning.

53 d7 ♘c6 54 ♔f3 ♔d6 55 ♔e4 ♘d8 56 ♘g4 ♔xd7 57 ♔d5

Black's c-pawn will fall, sealing his fate.

57...♘b7 58 ♘f6+ ♔c7 59 ♘e4 ♔b6 60 a3 ♘a5 61 ♘xc5 ♘c6 62 ♔d6 ♘a5 63 ♘d7+ ♔b7 64 ♘e5 ♘b3 65 c5 ♘d2 66 ♔d7 ♘b3 67 c6+ ♔b6 68 ♘d3 1-0

In the other crucial last-round encounter Michel Diaz Perez defeated fellow IM William Hernandez, thereby producing a tie for first place with Fernandez de la Vara, who triumphed overall on tie-break. This was a well-deserved victory for the teenager who is soon expected to become a grandmaster.

On top of the large Open, more than 200 players also competed in the 'Searching for Capablanca' children's tournaments, one for under-12s and one for those aged under 15. Both saw a three-way tie for first on 6/7, but perhaps the most outstanding individual achievement was that of the promising Leanet Diaz from the province of Matanzas. She tied for first place in the under-15 section and could well be a name to keep an eye out for.

54th Capablanca Memorial, Havana, Cuba - 3rd -13th May 2019 (Category 16 = 2641 Elo average rating)

	Player	Country	Rating	1		2		3		4		5		6		Pts	TPR
1	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2677	*	*	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	7	2782
2	Samuel Sevian	USA	2666	½	1	*	*	½	½	1	0	1	½	½	1	6½	2745
3	David Anton Guijarro	ESP	2667	½	½	½	½	*	*	½	½	1	1	½	1	6½	2745
4	Carlos Albornoz Cabrera	CUB	2566	0	0	0	1	½	½	*	*	0	½	½	½	3½	2545
5	Baskaran Adhiban	IND	2701	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	*	*	½	½	3½	2518
6	Yuri Gonzalez Vidal	CUB	2567	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	*	3	2506

Is Magnus Beatable?

The world champion was certainly not in Zagreb

Magnus Carlsen has secured his eighth tournament victory in a row and seventh of 2019, prompting questions as to whether he has become invincible. There can be little doubt that the world champion did appear so for much of the Zagreb leg of the Grand Chess Tour, but before we get there, we should remember that Carlsen could have lost not once, but twice in Norway. We witnessed Fabiano Caruana's missed classical win over the champ last month and Carlsen was arguably even more fortunate to survive against Levon Aronian.

L.Aronian-M.Carlsen
Stavanger 2019
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♕c7 6 0-0 e5

Deviating from 6...♗g7 7 ♖e1 e5, which was seen in Game 3 of the Caruana-Carlsen match last year.

7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 ♕e1!?

Highly creative preparation from Aronian. The queen dodges the pin and might relocate to c3, pressing on Black's advanced pawns. White also avoids 8 ♘bd2?! ♘g4, but he could settle for the standard 8 h3.

8...♗g4

It will be interesting to see how Black attempts to improve around here, or will the early ...♕c7 idea simply be shelved? 8...b6 is one possibility, but after 9 a4 a5 10 ♘a3 White may be able to obtain some pressure.

9 ♘bd2 ♘h5?!

True to his modern-day nature and handling of this line, Carlsen menaces aggression on the kingside, but White is rock-solid there and Aronian now opens lines in instructive fashion.

10 a3 ♗e7 11 ♕b1!

The b2-b4 break will be a strong one. It does undouble Black's pawns, but in return White will obtain pressure down the a- and b-files.

11...♘f4 12 b4 ♘e2+ 13 ♔h1 ♘d4

An ideal square for the knight in this variation, although it usually arrives via d7, f8 and e6. Moreover, here White has prepared a strong rejoinder and one which already leaves Black in some trouble.

14 ♘g1! g5?!

A radical decision. Quite possibly the remedy was worse than the disease, but at least at the cost of a pawn Black is now able to untangle, whereas after 14...cxb4 15 axb4 0-0 16 f4 he is simply under heavy pressure, as 16...♗xb4? fails to supply any real respite in view of 17 ♕xb4 ♘xc2 18 ♕c5.

15 bxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♗xg5 ♖g8 17 ♗h4 ♗e7 18 ♗g3

Not only keeping the kingside well fortified, but also hoping to exploit the position of the black queen. After 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 f4 exf4 20 ♖xf4 0-0-0 21 ♕b2 f5 Black would have enjoyed a bit of activity for his pawn, although it's doubtful it should really amount to too much.

18...0-0-0 19 ♘c4 f6 20 a4

This is logical, although so too would have been 20 f4!. Aronian must have been put off by 20...b5, but after 21 ♘e3 ♗e6 22 ♕e1 White is all set to unravel with c2-c3 and would have been doing extremely well.

20...♘e6!

Good defence from Carlsen, clamping down on the key f4-square and preparing the upcoming trade of bishops.

21 f3 ♗h5 22 ♗f2 ♗c5 23 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 24 ♘e2 ♗f7 25 ♘e3 ♕a5 26 ♕e1

Keeping things simple, but there was no reason to avoid 26 ♘g3 and if 26...♕d2 27 ♘gf5, when White's knights are rather well positioned and he will look to increase the queenside pressure.

26...♕xe1 27 ♖fxe1 a5

Carlsen fixes the weakness on a4 ahead of playing his and *AlphaZero*'s other favourite advance.

28 ♔g1 h5!? 29 h4!

Halting Black's pawn in its tracks makes good sense, especially as a future g2-g4 should lead to White creating a passed pawn on the kingside.

29...♔c7 30 ♔f2 ♗e6 31 ♖g1 ♖h8 32 ♖h1 ♖d7 33 ♖hd1 ♗f7 34 d4!

By no means forced or White's only pawn break, but sensible enough and Aronian had realised that he could allow Black control of the d-file.

34...exd4 35 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♘xd4 ♖d8 37 ♘e2 ♖d2 38 ♔e1 ♖d8 39 ♘f5

White's steady plan is to improve his forces via ♔f2-e3 and ♘ed4.

39...♖a8 40 ♘c3 ♗e6 41 ♘e3 ♔d6 42 ♖d1+ ♔e7

42...♔e5? was too ambitious even for Carlsen, since 43 g3 carries a certain threat and 43...f5 44 exf5 ♗xf5 can even be met by 45 ♘cd5!? – an idea we'll see much more of shortly.

43 ♖d4

Overprotecting a4 from the side and now 43...♖d8? 44 ♘f5+ ♗xf5 45 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 46 exf5 ♔e7 47 ♔e2 ♔d6 48 g4 would surely have been lost for Black. As such, Carlsen desperately tries to activate his own rook.

43...♖a6!? 44 ♔d2 ♖b6

45 ♘f5+

Plenty good enough, but once again there was a little tactic to exploit the d5-square: 45 ♖d5!, and if 45...cxd5 (or 45...♘d7 46 ♖xa5) 46 ♘cxd5+ ♗xd5 47 ♘xd5+ ♔d6 48 ♘xb6 ♔c6 49 ♘d5 ♘xa4 50 ♘xf6 ♘c5 51 ♘xh5 a4 52 ♔c3, with a trivial win.

45...♗xf5 46 exf5 ♖b2 47 ♖c4 ♔d6 48 ♘e4+

A human choice, although one can imagine Ding Liren raising his eyebrows at Aronian's

choice of allowing Carlsen to defend another pure rook endgame. 48 g4! is the choice of the silicon beast and after 48...hxg4 49 fxg4 Black is simply in huge trouble, as even 49...b5 (or 49...♖b4 50 ♖xb4 axb4 51 ♘a2) 50 axb5 cxb5 51 ♖d4+ ♔c6 52 ♔c1 ♖b3 doesn't really help him in view of 53 cxb3 ♘xb3+ 54 ♔b2 ♘xd4 55 h5 ♘f3 56 ♘e4! and wins.

48...♘xe4+ 49 ♖xe4 ♖a2 50 g4 hxg4 51 fxg4 ♔d5 52 ♔d3 ♖a3+ 53 c3 b5 54 h5?

We shouldn't forget that due to the unusual time control the players usually had to conduct endgames at lightning speed in Norway, but even so Aronian must still be having nightmares about this one. The priority had to be creating a pair of mobile passed pawns, so 54 g5! was indicated, and if 54...b4 55 ♖g4 (55 ♖c4 b3 56 ♖g4 also does the business) 55...♖xc3+ 56 ♔d2 fxg5 57 hxg5 ♖h3 58 g6 ♖h8 59 f6 ♔e6 60 ♖f4.

54...b4

By now Black even has a choice of ways to draw, 54...♖a1 55 axb5 cxb5 56 ♖e6 ♖g1 57 ♖xf6 ♖xg4 also being good enough.

55 ♖d4+

55 ♖c4 might seem more logical, but then Black has the wicked 55...c5! 56 h6 b3 57 h7 b2 58 ♔c2 ♖b3! 59 ♔b1 ♖b8 60 ♖f4 ♖h8, eliminating the h-pawn with an easy draw.

55...♔e5 56 ♖c4

54...♖xa4?

Both players were frantically blitzing by this point, so we mustn't be too harsh, but this could have lost. Instead, 56...b3! 57 ♖e4+ ♔d6 58 c4 b2+ 59 ♔c2 ♖b3! 60 ♔b1 ♔c5 was the route towards saving the half-point.

57 h6?

Returning the favour, rather than break through with 57 ♖e4+! ♔d5 58 g5!, and if 58...♖a3! (the white pawns are too quick after 58...fxg5? 59 f6 ♖a1 60 h6) 59 ♖e3!, a remarkably calm idea justified by the fact that White wins the pawn ending after 59...♖xc3+ 60 ♔d2 ♖xe3 61 ♔xe3 and that 59...fxg5 60 h6 bxc3 61 h7 c2+ 62 ♔xc2 ♖a2+ 63 ♔b3 ♖h2 64 ♖e7 is also winning, the f-pawn outbalancing Black's numerical supremacy.

57...♖a1

Switching the rook behind the passed pawn. Black is just in time to draw.

58 cxb4 axb4 59 ♖xc6 ♖a3+ 60 ♔c4 ♖c3+ 61 ♔b5 ♖h3 62 ♔xb4 ♖xh6 63 ♔c5 ♖h1 64 ♖e6+ ♔f4 65 ♖xf6 ♔xg4 66 ♔d6 ♔g5 67 ♔e7 ♖a1 68 ♖f8 ♖a7+ ½-½

A 2948 performance, an unbeaten 8/11 against an elite field and his first victories at classical chess over Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi gave Magnus plenty to celebrate in Zagreb.

The latest venture of the Grand Chess Tour was undoubtedly a welcome new event. Not yet another rapid and blitz event, but rather a classical 12-player-all, featuring all the Tour participants (the same players and format will be seen too in this month's Sinquefield Cup). The venue was the Novinarski Dom in Zagreb, a fairly impressive and classical building, if also a slightly too hot one during the early rounds, as well as the head office of the Croatian Journalists' Association.

These days Garry Kasparov divides his time between Croatia and the U.S. and it would seem likely that he had lobbied hard the Croatian Government to sponsor the event. Kasparov also joined in the commentary at times, appearing impressed by both Carlsen and initially Nepomniachtchi who burst out of the stalls to reach 3/3.

Unsurprisingly Carlsen didn't panic and as Nepomniachtchi was turned over by Ding in a brutal encounter we'll enjoy next month, the champ crushed Hikaru Nakamura to join the Russian and Wesley So in the lead on 4/6. On top of utterly annihilating Anish Giri in the opening round, Carlsen might also have secured early victories over Vishy Anand and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. However, the former saved a tricky knight ending, a lone pawn on a2 enabling Black, with a king on b1, to hold off White's extra queen and far-flung knight, while the latter not only survived, but appeared on the brink of victory.

M.Carlsen-S.Mamedyarov
Zagreb 2019
English Opening

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 h4!? ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 h5 c5 8 ♖b1 b6?!

One might already criticise Black's play, but here a clearly caught-out Mamedyarov really needed to develop with 8...♘c6.

9 e4 0-0

Castling into it, but 9...♗b7? 10 h6 ♗f8 11 ♘e5 would have been much worse.

10 hxg6 hxg6 11 d4 ♗b7?!

By now 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♗g4 was fairly imperative.

12 ♘g5! cxd4 13 ♕g4?

Having said 'A', Carlsen fails to correctly pronounce 'B'. Now Black is OK, whereas after 13 ♗c4! his position is critical. The simple

threat is 14 ♕f3 and 13...♘d7 14 cxd4 ♖c8 15 ♗b3 ♘f6 16 ♖h4 leaves White commanding the board.

13...♘d7 14 ♕h3?

As so often, one mistake follows another. 14 ♕h4 ♘f6 15 c4! would have left everything up for grabs.

14...♘f6 15 e5 ♘h5 16 e6

Carlsen had clearly been relying on this, but Black can now take over the initiative.

16...♕d5

Tempting, but with 16...f6! 17 ♘f7? (17 ♗d3! is a better try, but after 17...fxg5 18 ♗xg6 ♖f6 19 ♗f7+ ♔f8 20 ♕xh5 ♕d5 White is still worse) 17...♕d5 18 ♗d3 f5 Black would have been doing extremely well.

17 exf7+ ♖xf7 18 ♗d3?!

Continuing to push his luck, not allow a possible draw with 18 ♖b5 ♕xa2 19 ♘xf7, and if 19...♕a1 20 ♔d1 ♕a4+ 21 ♔e1 ♕a1.

18...♕e5+ 19 ♔d1 dxc3 20 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 21 ♖e1 c2+!

This simply must be correct, preventing the white king hiding on c2.

22 ♗xc2 ♖d8+ 23 ♗d2

White's position looks fairly desperate and after 23...♕f6! and only then ...♘f4 Black would have retained the upper hand.

23...♕d6? 24 ♕e3 ♘f4 25 ♔c1 ♗h6

Remarkably Black is no longer better after Carlsen's calm defence, while here 25...♘xg2 26 ♗b4 illustrates why the black queen should have gone to f6.

26 ♔b2! ♖c8

Escaping to relative safety and now 26...♗g7+ 27 ♗c3 ♘xg2 28 ♗b3+ ♔e8 29 ♗a4+ ♔f7 30 ♗b3+ would have been a fitting end to a dramatic game. However, these two great fighters weren't done just yet, although the point was still eventually split:

27 ♖bc1 e6? 28 ♔b1 ♗xg2 29 ♗b3 ♖xc1+ 30 ♗xc1 ♗h3 31 ♗b2 ♗f5+ 32 ♔a1 ♗g7 33 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 34 ♖d1 ♘d3 35 ♗c4 ♕e5+! 36 ♕xe5+ ♘xe5 37 ♗e2 g5 38 ♖c1 ♔f6 39 ♖c7 ♗d3 40 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 41 ♖xa7 ♘xf2 42 ♖b7 g4 43 ♖xb6 g3 44 a4 ♘e4 45 ♖b1 ♘c5 46 a5 ♔e5 47 ♔b2 ♔f4 48 ♔c3 g2 49 ♔c4 ♘a6 50 ♔b5 ♘b8 51 ♔c4 ♘a6 52 ♔b5 ♘b8 53 ♔c4 ♘a6 54 ♖g1 ♔g3 55 ♔d4 ♔f2 56 ♖xg2+ ♔xg2 57 ♔e5 ♘c5 58 a6 ♘xa6 59 ♔xe6 ½-½

Yet more impressive creativity and then fine defence by Carlsen, who the next day had to rely on the drawing potential of opposite-coloured bishops and then a wrong-coloured bishop and rook's pawn to hold against Fabiano Caruana, possibly regretting the switch from 1...c5 to 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 ♖e1 ♗e7!?. However, from the rest day before round 7 Carlsen was completely dominant, beginning by swatting aside Nepomniachtchi to claim the sole lead.

I.Nepomniachtchi-M.Carlsen
Zagreb 2019

White has drifted a little in an anti-Sveshnikov and was now stunned by **27...f5!?** when he had to find the right recapture:

28 gxf5?

Missing a second blow. 28 exf5 was necessary and after 28...♕e3+ (the king is safe enough after 28...♗d4+ 29 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 30 ♔h3) 29 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 30 ♔h1 cxd3 31 cxd3 ♖bc8 32 ♖de1 a draw would have remained likely.

28...g4! 29 d4

Crashing through as either the check on h4 will prove decisive or 29 ♔e2 ♖xf5 30 dxc4 ♖xh5.

29...♕h4+ 30 ♔e2 ♕h2+ 31 ♖f2 gxf3+ 0-1

A rook is falling.

The champ soon had even more to celebrate for despite having the black pieces again in round 8, he downed Ding Liren, making fine use of the bishop-pair to secure his first ever classical victory over the world no.3. Levon Aronian then fought back well to hold off Carlsen who thus led So by half a point with two to play.

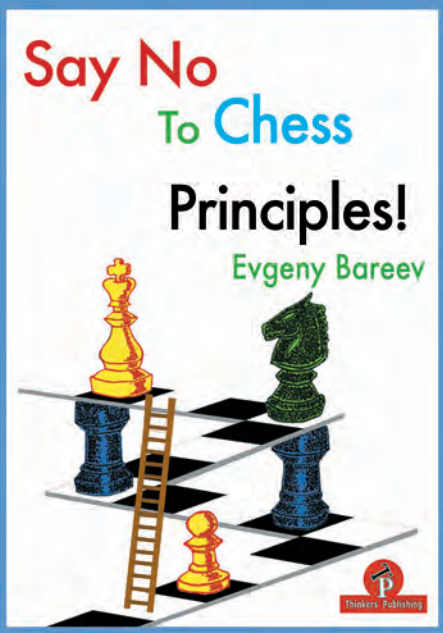
A grandstand finished seemed likely with So having the white pieces against the champ in the penultimate round, but the American was far from ambitious and failed to make anything of an edge. In contrast in the final round, Carlsen gradually exploited an early edge and never allowed Black to reach an opposite-coloured bishop endgame as he outplayed Maxime Vachier-Lagrave to win the tournament by a whole point.

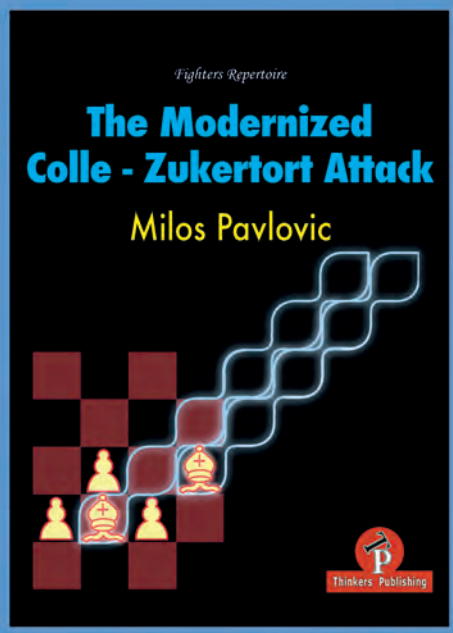
Carlsen's rating is now 2882, equalling his all-time record from May 2014. He was understandably delighted afterwards, admitting that "For me, it's huge." He added, "I really didn't know what to expect. I've been playing a lot recently and I felt a bit spent towards the end of Norway Chess, but it's been a dream, especially that the second half has gone so well."

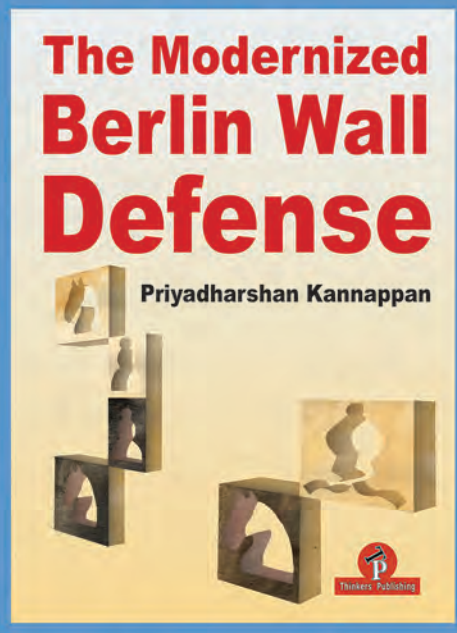
After another almost Kasparovian victory for Carlsen, who will sit out the next GCT event in Paris before returning in Saint Louis, we should leave the final word to Garry Kasparov: "I'm grateful that instead of just trying to play for '+2' or '+3', he is fighting in every game. So I think he spends more time at the chessboard than any other player. So that's phenomenal; it's absolutely phenomenal."

Grand Chess Tour Croatia - Zagreb , Croatia - 26th June - 8th July 2019 (Category 22, average rating = 2782)

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2875	*	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	8	2948
2	Wesley So	USA	2754	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	7	2886
3	Levon Aronian	ARM	2752	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	6	2820
4	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2819	½	½	½	*	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	6	2814
5	Anish Giri	NED	2779	0	½	½	½	*	0	1	½	½	1	½	½	5½	2782
6	Ding Liren	CHN	2805	0	0	½	½	1	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	5½	2779
7	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2775	0	½	½	1	0	0	*	½	1	1	½	½	5½	2782
8	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2748	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	5	2748
9	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2767	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	0	½	½	4½	2718
10	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2774	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	1	*	½	½	4½	2717
11	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2779	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	4½	2717
12	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2754	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	4	2682







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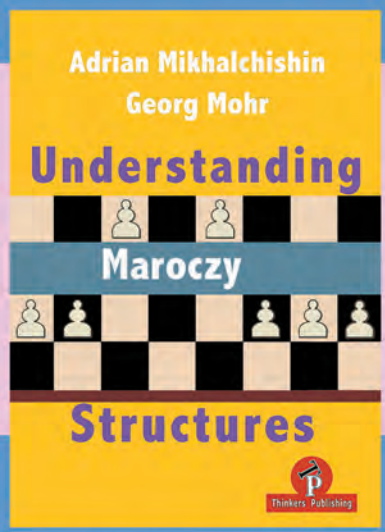

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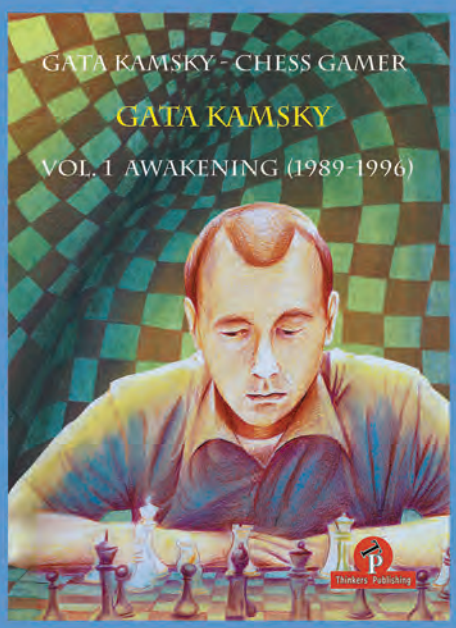
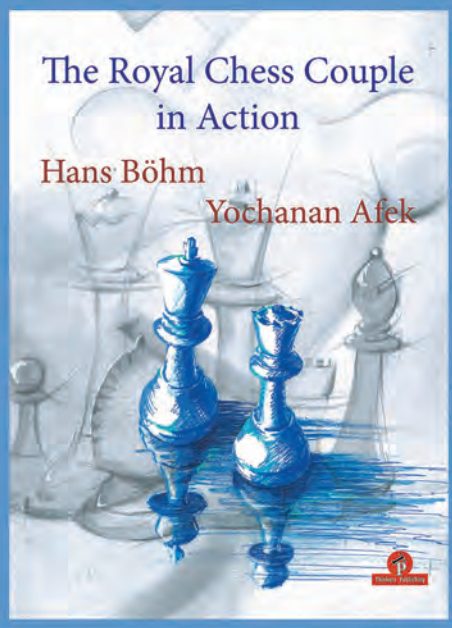
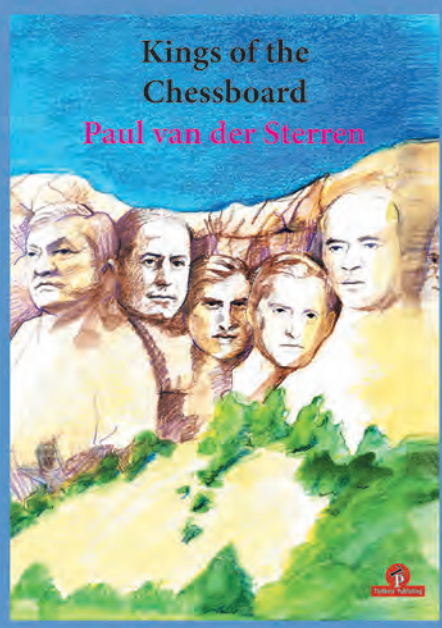






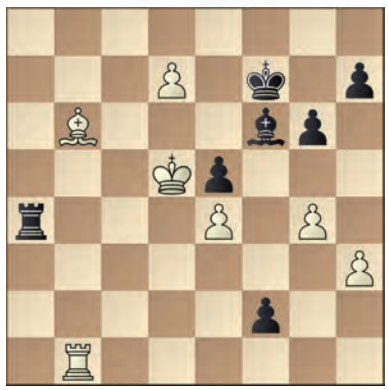
Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from many recent events, including Norway Chess and the Women's Candidates. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 54.

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) M.Flint-I.Lamb
4NCL, Horwich 2019
White to Play



(2) M.Bosiocic-D.Gukesh
Karlsruhe 2019
Black to Play

(3) L.Travadon-V.Gazik
Mitropa Cup, Radenci 2019
White to Play and Draw

(4) I.Nepomniachtchi-Wei Yi
Moscow (rapid) 2019
White to Play

(5) M.Muzychuk-Tan Zhongyi
Kazan Candidates 2019
White to Play

(6) D.Barrass-S.Hayes
York 2019
White to Play

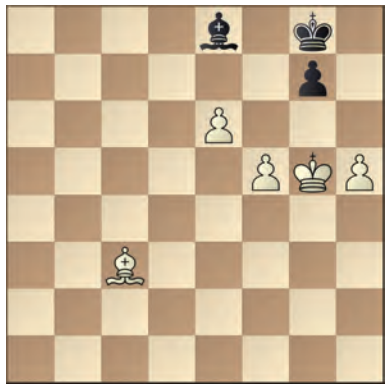
Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54

(7) M.White-M.Surtees
4NCL, Horwich 2019
Black to Play

(8) Bu Xiangzhi-G.Jones
Hengshui (rapid) 2019
Black to Play

(9) S.Karjakin-W.So
Zagreb 2019
White to Play

(10) N.Tuvsanaa-Lu Shanglei
Qinhuangdao 2019
White to Play



(11) Yu Yangyi-Ding Liren
Stavanger (Armageddon) 2019
White to Play

(12) D.Vigorito-N.Nestorovic
Las Vegas 2019
White to Play

(13) A.Indjic-A.Puranik
Nezhmetdinov Memorial, Kazan (rapid) 2019
White to Play

(14) M.Matlakov-S.Khanin
Russian Team Championship, Sochi 2019
White to Play

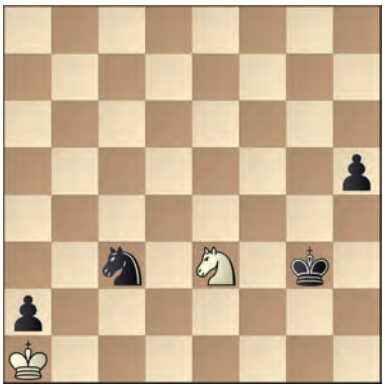
(15) T.Lazov-M.Petrov
Thessaloniki 2019
White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 54

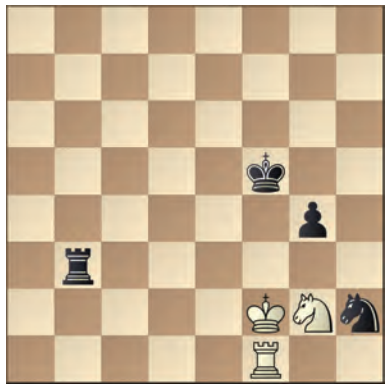
(16) R.Moss-G.Bolt
Gloucester 2019
White to Play

(17) A.Saric-M.Hovhannisyan
Dublin 2019
White to Play

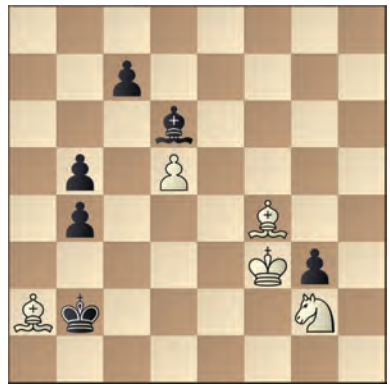
(18) M.Carlsen-S.Hamann
Copenhagen (simul) 2019
White to Play



(19) G.Arnaudov-D.Van Kerkhof
Utrecht 2019
Black to Play



(20) G.Meier-M.Vachier-Lagrave
Karlsruhe 2019
White to Play and Draw



(21) Tan Zhongyi-K.Lagno
Kazan Candidates 2019
White to Play and Draw

(22) V.Anand-Ding Liren
Stavanger (Armageddon) 2019
White to Play

(23) Wei Yi-Jinshi Bai
Chinese League 2019
White to Play

(24) K.Sasikiran-V.Artemiev
Poikovsky 2019
White to Play

Getting Hackneyed

Hackney captain Paul Conway reveals how the Middlesex League was conquered

Three seasons ago Hackney's Middlesex League team was in need of a new venue and my Chief Exec said we could use a room at the office. The club's view was that, since I'd have to be there for each of the home games, I might as well captain.

I quickly realised that Hackney has a lot of strong players on its books. I was able to get decent teams out the first two seasons, but we dropped points to sides other than Hendon I and they powered through each time. We took a match off them at the end of last year, but they'd already won the league by then so it didn't really count. We finished second in these first two seasons. After the first year we migrated to the Clarence Tavern, a decent pub in Stoke Newington with a nice line in halloumi fries and garlic mayo.

In 2018-19 the time had come to make sure we didn't drop careless points, and to take on Hendon I for the crunch matches. Hendon had two teams in the first division, had won the championship for the last eight years and took things very seriously.

Muswell Hill had taken us down before; on 22nd November we played them at the Clarence and won 5-3, including this convincing performance.

The Middlesex League season finale, with Hackney away against Athenaeum. In the foreground IM Richard Bates has the black pieces in a rook ending grind against Mark Gray. FM Richard Britton (left) and John Reid (right) spectate, while in the background FM Bob Eames and Carl Hetherington are still slugging it out too. Both these games were drawn and so Hackney won the match 6½-1½ to take the Championship for the first time since 2002.

M.Manelidou-D.Shaw
Hackney I vs Muswell Hill
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 ♗xc6 bxc6 6 ♖e1 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 d3 ♖b8 9 h3 d6 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘e4 dxe5 12 ♘xc5 ♕d6 13 ♘b3 ♘f4 14 ♗e3 ♕c7 15 ♕d2 ♗e6 16 ♗c5 ♗d5 17 ♕e3 a5 18 d4 a4 19 ♘bd2 ♖xb2 20 dxe5 ♖xc2 21 ♕xf4 ♖xc5 22 ♕xa4 ♖a5 23 ♕c2 ♖fa8 24 ♘b3 ♖a3 25 ♘bd4 ♖xa2 26 ♖xa2 ♖xa2

Black has two bishops against two knights and an extra pawn – what's not to like?

27 ♕c5 ♕a7 28 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 29 ♖b1 h6 30 ♖b8+ ♔h7 31 ♖c8 ♖a1+ 32 ♔h2 ♖c1 33 ♖c7 c5 34 g3 ♗xe5 0-1

The centralised bishops are a picture, and too much for the knights; White is losing more material or getting mated on h1.

On 12th March we played away against Hendon I. Both teams were on 100%, but they had played more matches than us. We were giving this our best shot and had a good team on paper. As I was finishing work, Dave Ledger texted to say he was having trouble with his journey and could we get our sub to play. I replied that I was the sub and for him to get an Uber. This was an Uber gambit declined, and he advised me to play a captain's innings.

As is customary on these occasions, I lost the toss. This did mean that I was White on bottom board. My young opponent Gautam Jain was graded 183, and I mentally added about 20 points for a fast-improving junior, while I'm a well-weathered 166. The match was being played at speed: 60 minutes for all the moves, plus a 15-second increment per move. In a main line Spanish, he looked to be limbering up to play a Marshall, I avoided this with 8 a4, and we reached a position which was perfectly playable, before I lashed out with an unnecessarily loosening f2-f4.

P.Conway-J.Gautam
Hendon I vs Hackney I

This is the position after 26 c4, which I played to stop his rook on the seventh becoming too dangerous, and to liquidate some pawns on the queenside. My bishop is out of play, and the centre is going to collapse. It had all looked so promising. On the plus side, Black has used up his time and is playing on the increment, and also the position of my bishop is not completely without merit.

26...♖xb2 27 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 28 ♕xb3 ♗c3 29 ♖c1 ♕e3 30 ♖d1 ♗xe4 31 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 32 h3 ♕c6 33 ♔h2 ♖e2

Some sort of natural law operates, so that the side giving up material tends to get compensation, even when it's not been a deliberate sacrifice. Here the offside bishop on h6 and the unlikely march of the cavalry c-pawn combine to set my opponent more problems than he could solve in 15 seconds a move.

34 ♖d5 ♖e1 35 c5 ♕e8 36 ♖xd6 ♖a1 37 c6 ♗g7 38 c7 ♖h1+ 1-0

We won this away match 5-3, with 8 keenly contested games. A word of appreciation here for Michael Bennett, the Hendon captain, who drove round all the local pubs until he found us – in the heat of victory, I'd gone out into the March cold and left my coat at the venue.

On 11th April we faced the rematch at home. It was obvious that Hendon were going to bring the strongest side they could, and so it proved: three GMs and an average team grading of 230. We were significantly outgraded on all boards, but had also worked to strengthen our team – club stalwart Francis (Frank) Chin is a former Malaysian Champion, and knew the Malay junior Li Tian Yeoh who had had been a regular top board for Imperial College in the London League, and at the time of the match was just back from the Dubai Open where he'd been trying for his third GM norm. For obvious reasons Li Tian was Black on top board.

T.Fodor-Li Tian Yeoh
Hackney I vs Hendon I
Modern Benoni

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♘c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 h3 ♗g7 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗d3

Back in 2014 I'd not long returned to competitive play after 30 years out, and this was played against me in the 4NCL. The Modern Main Line of the Benoni was unwelcome news – I'd been working from what I could remember of Bill Hartston's 1973 Batsford monograph *The Benoni* in descriptive notation, and the line is not mentioned there. I hadn't kept up with the latest nuances, but it was still a shock to find there was a new main variation about which I knew nothing. Black is going to have trouble finding a useful deployment for his light-squared bishop, and some other problems besides. I watched this game with increased interest.

9...a6 10 a4 ♘h5 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 ♘h2 ♖e8 13 g4

Li Tian commented later that White has misplayed this: ♘h2 and g4 weaken the important dark squares f4, e5, and d4.

13...♘hf6 14 ♗f4 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 ♘fd7 16 ♕d2 c4

This is an advance I want to play in these positions, but it often weakens the d4-square. Here White can't get a knight to it and when the bishop gets there, Black's knights make a good job of shutting it out.

17 ♗e3 ♕a5 18 ♘b1 ♕c7 19 ♕c2 ♘c5 20 ♘d2 ♘cd3 21 ♗d4 ♘f4 22 ♗d1 h5 23 ♖a3 ♗d7 24 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 25 ♘xc4 ♗g7 26 ♖f3 g5 27 a5 ♖ac8 28 b3 h4

I'd been expecting 28...hxg4 here to play for more of an attack, but I'm not the one with two GM norms and Li Tian plays to lock down the dark squares further. He had used nearly all his time by now and was playing on increment. The reason that I've got the moves is that he was not only recording his moves, but also writing down the clock times, probably with neat little brackets, i.e. (0.03). The match was played at the slightly more sedate time control of 75 minutes plus 15 seconds a move, but I'm still impressed.

29 ♖xf4 gxf4 30 ♘f3 ♗b5 31 ♘fd2 ♗e5 32 ♔g2 ♕c5 33 ♕d3 ♕b4 34 ♗c2 ♔f8 35 ♖b1 ♔e7 36 ♘f3 ♗xc4 37 bxc4 ♕xc4 38 ♖xb7+ ♔f6 39 g5+ ♔g6 40 ♘xh4+ ♔xg5 41 ♕f3 ♔f6 42 ♗d3 ♖g8+ 43 ♔h2

43...♕xd3!

The triumph of Black's dark-square strategy. The queen is immune from capture because of 44...f3+ and back-rank mate. There are only spite checks left for White.

44 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 45 ♕h5+ ♔e7 46 ♘f5+ ♔d8 47 ♕h4+ ♔c7 0-1

We won this one 4½-3½ and were the only side still on 100%. There were six matches to play, and we continued with wins until we had an upset at home against Athenaeum, languishing near the bottom of the table and eager to avoid relegation. On June 12th we played them again, away, and this time got the result we needed.

Notes by Richard Britton

C.Menzies-R.Britton
Athenaeum I vs Hackney I
Sicilian Moscow

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+ ♗d7 4 a4 ♘c6 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♖e1 e6 7 d3 ♗e7 8 ♘bd2 0-0 9 ♘c4

9 ♘f1 a6 10 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 11 a5 is also about equal, but maybe Black can make something of the two bishops.

9...♘d4

The first new move. 9...d5 10 exd5 exd5 11 ♘ce5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 looks a bit better than my choice as the bishop on b5 is a bit isolated after 12...♗e6.

10 ♘xd4 cxd4 11 c3?!

11 ♗f4 should be an edge, and if 11...♗c8 12 a5 d5 13 e5 dxc4 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗xc4 ♗d7.

11...d5 12 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 13 ♘d2?!

13 exd5 exd5 14 ♘a3 dxc3 15 bxc3 would have been about equal.

13...dxc3 14 bxc3 ♖c8 15 ♗b2 ♘c5 16 ♘b3?

After 16 ♕c2 I intended 16...♗g5 17 ♘f3 dxe4 18 dxe4 ♗e7 when I think Black is a little better and 16 ♕b1 dxe4 17 ♘xe4 seems quite good for Black, in view of 17...♕xd3 18 ♗a3 ♕c4 19 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 20 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 21 ♕xb7 a5.

16...dxe4?!

I could have exploited the unfortunate line-up on the b-file with 16...♕b6!: for instance, 17 ♖a3 (or 17 ♘xc5 ♕xb2 18 d4 ♗xc5 19 dxc5 ♖xc5) 17...♘xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♗xa3 19 ♗xa3 ♕xb3 20 ♗xf8 dxe4 21 ♕xe4 ♖xf8.

17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♖xe4?

18 d4 ♕b6 19 ♖b1 ♗d6 20 ♖xe4 ♖fd8 is

better, but White's c- and d-pawns are targets.

18...♗xf2+! 19 ♔xf2? ♕b6+ 20 ♔f1 ♕xb2 21 c4 ♖fd8

This looked natural to me, but 21...♖c5 22 ♖f4 ♕e5 23 g3 ♕d6 24 ♕e2 e5 25 ♖f3 is clearly preferable.

22 ♖b1 ♕a3 23 ♕b3 ♖xd3 24 ♕xb7 ♖cd8 25 ♕xa7

Getting the pawn back, but Black's king is the safer and his pieces the better coordinated. Besides having to look after his king, White also has to keep an eye on his two queenside pawns.

25...♕d6

25...♖d2 26 ♕e3 ♕a2 (and not 26...♕xa4?? 27.♕xd2) 27 ♖e1 h6 is cleaner.

26 ♔g1 ♖d2 27 ♖f1 f5 28 ♖e3 ♖b2 29 a5 ♕c6 30 ♖g3 ♖d7 31 ♕e3 ♖dd2 32 ♕g5 g6 33 h4 ♕xc4 34 ♖a1

If 34 h5 ♕xf1+!.

34...♕d4+ 35 ♔h2 ♕d6 36 ♔h3 f4 37 a6

A last trick.

37...♖a2 38 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 39 ♖f3

39 ♖c3 ♖xa6 40 ♔h2 ♖a8 41 ♖c4 e5 42 ♖e4 ♖e8 43 h5 ♔g7 44 ♖a4 ♕e7 45 h6+ ♔f7 is hopeless too for White.

39...e5 40 ♖c3 ♖xa6 41 ♖c8+ ♔g7 42 ♖d8 ♕e6+ 43 ♔h2 h6 0-1

The Middlesex is a highly competitive league, with no quarter asked or given. It is also very social – there have been many interesting in-match conversations when I've not been playing, and many post-mortem drinks with our opponents.

The recent popularity of playing on increment has been a welcome development - at a time when grandmaster games do not use adjournments. it really is an anachronism to adjourn and hand over to computer analysis. The London League will now be dispensing with adjournments in the majority of games. Increments provide a mechanism for games to end without the brutality of a pure quickplay finish, in which three hours' work can be spoiled in an instant.

Already October is coming up, and we look forward to the challenge of a new season.

Readers' Letters

Paul Littlewood

I enjoyed the 60 Seconds interview with IM Paul Littlewood in the June edition. Your readers might be interested to see the game he described as one of his most memorable. I remember it too!

P.Littlewood-P.Andrews
Rugby vs Oxford University II, National Club Ch. 1981
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 ♗g4 5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3 a6 8 0-0 ♘bd7 9 e4 e5? 10 g4 exd4 11 gxh5 dxc3 12 e5

According to my engine this gives up most of White's advantage because 12...♘b6 is a reasonable defence, and if 13 ♕b3 ♘fd5, but Black had different ideas.

12...cxb2? 13 exf6 bxa1♕ 14 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 15 ♕d5+ ♔e8 16 f7+ ♔e7 17 ♖e1+ ♕e5 18 ♗g5+ 1-0

Peter Andrews, Dulwich

Vera Menchik

I was extremely interested in Malcolm Pein's latest Editorial, regarding D-Day, and the anniversary of Vera Menchik's death.

My wife kindly bought me a book on Vera Menchik from Chess & Bridge last year, while back in 1994 I was requested to write an article about John Lewis becoming the National Chess Centre, which appeared in the September 1994 issue of *CHESS*.

John Spedan Lewis, who was the founder of the John Lewis Partnership, was a chess fanatic. He employed some very well-known people, who were famous in chess, which included Vera Menchik, who became Manager of the Chess Centre, which was due to open in September 1938.

The original invitation for Vera Menchik to become manager came from C.H.O'D Alexander who was already working for Spedan Lewis, in the research department. Alexander became an International Master in 1950. In his opening paragraph to Vera Menchik, Alexander wrote the following:

"Dear Mrs Stevenson, I am never quite sure whether to write to you as Mrs Stevenson or Miss Menchik; I use the former name as you so often defeated me as Miss Menchik, but I like to hope a change of luck may follow a change of name."

Unfortunately the National Centre didn't last long, since it was bombed in 1939 and, even more sadly, Vera was killed a few years later.

Martin Leanse (Former chairman, John Lewis Partnership Chess Club 1997-2002)

Read on for much more about Vera Menchik.

The Rise of Aleksandra

Aleksandra Goryachkina ran out a clear winner of the Women's Candidates in Kazan

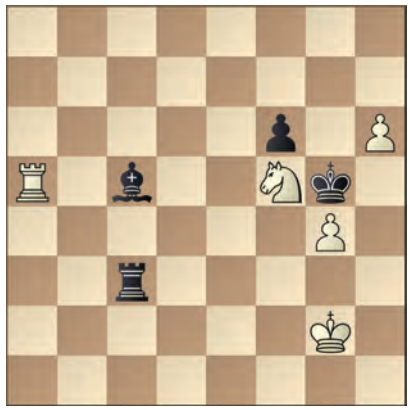
20-year-old Aleksandra Goryachkina came of age at the Women's Candidates tournament in Kazan. Goryachkina's talent has long been obvious, ever since she became World Under-8 Girls Champion in 2008 and then won, in only her third appearance in the tournament, the 2015 Russian Women's Superfinal. Nevertheless, her dominance over the field in Kazan, claiming first place ahead of a strong field with two rounds to spare, must go down as a landmark result.

Goryachkina's recent results had been mixed, but it was her rivals who could only display erratic form at the Candidates, which was, as expected, quite a lively tournament with under 50% of the games being drawn. While the youngest participant won as many as six of her first 9 games ahead of easing off the gas a little, two of the pre-tournament favourites, Alexandra Kosteniuk and former women's world champion Mariya Muzychuk, lost four and five games respectively.

Kateryna Lagno showed flashes of brilliance, but ultimately drew too many games, as did second-placed Anna Muzychuk. The older Muzychuk could be pleased to recover from losing two of her first three games, but only finished one and a half points behind Goryachkina after the tournament leader fell to her first defeat at the hands of the younger Muzychuk in the final round, in a game we'll enjoy shortly in these pages.

As one might expect from a leading Russian player, Goryachkina is well prepared and usually happy to aim for a small positional plus. Like the world champion, she is unafraid to grind, eventually exploiting an extra pawn in a rook endgame against Lagno in some 80 moves, 12 less than she required to beat Gunina the round before in a game which featured a neat late tactic.

A.Goryachkina-V.Gunina
Round 2



White is pressing, but Black would have retained good chances to hold after 69...♔g6. Can you see, though, why the g-pawn is taboo?

69...♔xg4? 70 h7 ♖c2+ 71 ♔f1 ♖h2 72 ♘h4!

An easy move to overlook in advance and the problem, as if 72...♔xh4? 73 h8♕+ or 72...♖xh4? 73 ♖a4+ ♔h3 74 ♖xh4+ ♔xh4 75 h8♕+.

72...♔g3 73 h8♕

The ultra calm 73 ♖a4! would have saved White some work.

73...♖f2+ 74 ♔e1 ♗b4+

To her credit, Gunina finds the only way to fight on, but Goryachkina was never going to let this one slip away.

75 ♔d1 ♗xa5 76 ♘g6 ♗d2 77 ♕h4+ ♔f3 78 ♕xf6+ ♔g2 79 ♕c6+ ♔g1 80 ♘h4 ♗f4 81 ♕g6+ ♔h2 82 ♕g4 ♗g3 83 ♘f5 ♖f1+ 84 ♔e2 ♖f2+ 85 ♔d3 ♖g2 86 ♕h5+ ♔g1 87 ♘e3 ♖a2 88 ♕g6 ♔h2 89 ♕h7+ ♔g1 90 ♕g8 ♖a3+ 91 ♔e2 ♔h2 92 ♔f3 1-0

Goryachkina's most powerful victory was achieved, appropriately enough, against the long-time Russian no.1 and it will be no surprise if we soon become used to seeing her on top board for Russia in team events.

A.Goryachkina-A.Kosteniuk
Round 8
Queen's Gambit Vienna

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 c5 7 ♗xc4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♕a5

A solid alternative to the main line of the Vienna variation, 8...♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕a5. Team Carlsen must have expected Fabiano Caruana to take up this theoretical line in London, or at least the world champion appeared well prepared when playing the unusual 10 ♗d2!? against Aronian at Baden-Baden ahead of switching to 10 ♘b5 and then 10 ♗b5+ in his two most recent white games with Vishy Anand.

9 ♗d2 ♕c5

Discombobulating so is the main point of Black's play.

10 ♗b5+ ♗d7 11 ♘b3 ♕c7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗d3 ♖d8 14 ♕e2 ♘c6 15 ♖ac1

Sensible play thus far from both players. White's extra space gives her a small pull, but Black is, of course, very solid.

15...♗e8 16 ♖fd1 a6?!

16...♘g4!? 17 g3 ♕b6 was far from ridiculous, but after the prophylactic 18 ♗b1! White should retain a small edge.

17 ♗e3

Already ♘a4 is something of a threat and 17...b5 18 f4 also quite unpleasant for Black.

17...♗d6 18 g3 ♕e7 19 ♗b6!

Highlighting the downside to Black's 16th move. Unless the rook moves to d7, the bishop can be driven back, but it will be Black who remains with a rather tangled-up set-up.

19...♖dc8 20 ♗b1!?

Prophylaxis ahead of trying to set up a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal in conjunction with e4-e5, while Goryachkina might have viewed 20 f4 e5 21 f5 as too committal.

20...♘d7 21 ♗e3 ♗b4

Playing for exchanges, but losing time, so Black might have done better to dig in with 21...f6 22 f4 ♖d8 followed by ...♗f7 and ...♗c7 (Pein), keeping things tight at the back.

22 a3 ♘a5 23 ♘xa5 ♗xa5 24 ♗d4!

White's bishops begin to play and now 24...♗b6 25 e5 ♗xd4 26 ♖xd4 ♘f8 27 ♗e4 ♘g6 28 f4 would be fairly passive, if also still quite solid for Black.

24...f6 25 ♗a2 ♗f7 26 e5!

26...fxe5

Accepting a weakness on e6, but 26...f5 27 ♕e3 ♗h5 28 ♘e2 would be even worse.

27 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 28 ♕xe5 b5?

This pseudo-active move achieves little. White also dominates the board after 28...♗c7 29 ♕e3 ♗d6 30 ♘e4, but 28...♗xc3! 29 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 30 ♕xc3 ♖d8 would have offered Black definite chances to hold, albeit only after a long and likely unpleasant defence.

29 ♘e4 ♗c7 30 ♕c3 ♕f8 31 ♕d4

Goryachkina is in no rush and content to slowly probe.

31...♖d8 32 ♕e3 h6 33 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 34 ♘c5

It's high time to go after the weak spot in Black's position.

20-year-old Aleksandra Goryachkina came of age at the Women's Candidates tournament in Kazan, winning six of her first 9 games to qualify for a world title match with Ju Wenjun.

34...♗b6 35 ♗xe6 ♗xe6

White also finds herself quite actively placed after 35...♗xc5 36 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 37 ♕b3+ ♔g6 38 ♖xc5 ♔h7 39 ♕f3, but Black might have tried 35...♕f6 36 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7.

36 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 37 ♘e4 ♗d4?! 38 ♖d1 ♖a7?

Totally underestimating the danger down the d-file. Of course, 38...♗xf2+? would have failed to 39 ♘xf2, but Kosteniuk could have fought on for the time being with 38...♕b6 39 ♕xb6 ♗xb6 40 ♖d6 ♗c7.

39 ♘d6! ♗xf2+

Desperation, in view of 39...♕b6(f6) 40 ♕e8+ ♔h7 41 ♕e4+.

40 ♔xf2 ♖d7 41 ♔g2 ♕a8+ 42 ♕d5 1-0

Goryachkina may have only squeezed into the Candidates once Hou Yifan neglected to abandon her studies at Oxford to play, but there could be little doubt that she fully deserves a world title shot at Ju Wenjun, in a match scheduled to take place later this year. Ju Wenjun is, of course, a very serious and strong player, but if Goryachkina can play at the same level as in Kazan, the match between the women's no.2 and no.3 in the world should be one to savour.

FIDE Women's Candidates - Kazan, Russia, 30th May - 17th June 2019 (Category XII, average rating = 2532)

	Player	Country	Rating	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		Pts	TPR
1	Aleksandra Goryachkina	RUS	2522	*	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	9½	2666
2	Anna Muzychuk	UKR	2539	½	½	*	*	0	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	8	2580
3	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2513	0	½	1	½	*	*	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	0	1	7	2534
4	Kateryna Lagno	RUS	2554	0	½	½	0	1	½	*	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	7	2528
5	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	2563	½	1	½	½	½	1	0	½	*	*	0	½	1	0	½	0	6½	2498
6	Nana Dzagnidze	GEO	2510	0	½	1	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	*	*	0	1	1	0	6½	2505
7	Alexandra Kosteniuk	RUS	2546	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	1	0	*	*	0	1	6	2479
8	Valentina Gunina	RUS	2506	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	0	*	*	5½	2455

How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

Mariya Muzychuk will have been disappointed to finish the Women's Candidates' tournament with 6½/14 – a full three points behind the winner, Aleksandra Goryachkina. Muzychuk was Women's World Champion from April 2015 to March 2016, and her current rating of 2563 made her the top seed in the tournament. Nevertheless, she had some consolation by defeating Goryachkina in the last round and in so doing winning the tournament brilliancy prize.

This was a stylish win, mixing fine strategy with a keen initiative and well-calculated tactics. Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

M.Muzychuk-A.Goryachkina
FIDE Women's Candidates,
Kazan 2019
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗e2 c5

This is the most ambitious move, attacking White's centre immediately, but it's risky as Black's king is a long way from reaching safety on the kingside. 5...♘e7 and 5...♘d7 are safe alternatives.

6 ♗e3 ♕b6

If one of my pupils had chosen this move blindly, without knowing the theory, I would admonish them for reckless play. Can it really be wise for the queen to go on an adventure when not one of the kingside pieces has moved? Only in the age of computer preparation can one hope to get away with such a flagrant violation of opening principles.

A safer continuation, chosen by players such as Karpov and Anand, starts with 6...cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘e7 8 c4 ♘bc6.

7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 0-0 ♕xb2 9 ♕e1 cxd4

Instead, 9...c4 attempts to close the position, but Black still has to face a huge attack after 10 ♖b1 ♕xc2 11 ♗d1!? ♕xb1 12 ♘xb1 ♗xb1 13 ♗a4 ♗d3 14 ♕a5 ♔d7 15 ♖d1, and White won in 23 moves, Motylev-Donchenko, Moscow 2017.

10 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♗b4

The test starts here.

12 ♖b1

Three points. You have been dropped into a position that is a theoretical cauldron. Don't panic. Just deal with the threats as they come. This move forces exchanges and, to some extent, clears the situation.

The main alternative, 12 ♘db5 (*three points*), maintains the complexity. Black's best response is 12...♗a5 13 ♖b1 ♕xc2 and now Saric-Dziuba, German Bundesliga 2019, led to a tricky endgame: 14 ♖c1 ♕b2 15 ♘d6+ ♔f8 16 ♘xf5 exf5 17 ♘a4 ♗xe1 18 ♘xb2 ♗d2 19 ♖c7 ♘e7 20 ♖d1 ♗a5 21 ♖xb7, etc. This continuation highlights a typical scenario in this opening: White has activity and a lead in development; Black has an extra pawn. Which is more important?

12 ♗b5+ ♔f8 doesn't really help the cause: the b-file has been blocked, and that, as we will soon see, only helps Black.

12...♗xc3

Instead, 12...♕xc3 13 ♖xb4 ♕xe1 14 ♖xe1 leads to a similar endgame, with the difference that White's rook stands on b4. A minor difference, but one that is supposed to be slightly more favourable to White than the game continuation.

13 ♖xb2

One point.

13...♗xe1

14 ♖xe1

One point.

14...b6

According to my not-very-comprehensive database, 21 games have arrived at this position, with no less than seven different moves tried for White. I have no doubt that some midnight oil was burned by the players and their teams in preparation for this game.

15 h4

Three points. This, to me, is not the most obvious move – until I check out what *Stockfish* has to say about the position, and we find that this is the recommendation. White threatens to trap the bishop with g4, etc, but there is more to it than that. Let's examine the alternatives:

a) 15 ♗b5+ (*three points*) and Black has to be careful: 15...♔f8 16 ♘xf5 exf5 and now 17 ♖b3 or 17 c4, with the usual balance between activity and material.

b) 15 ♘xf5 exf5 16 ♗b5+ ♔f8 (*three points*) is similar.

c) 15 ♖b3 (*two points*) is not as testing: 15...♘e7 16 ♖c3 ♖c8 17 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 and the reduced material made life a bit easier for Black, Fressinet-Rozum, European Individual Championship, Skopje 2019.

d) 15 ♘b5 (*two points*) should be met by 15...♔f8, when 16 c4 opens the position for White's pieces.

e) 15 a4 (no points) doesn't challenge Black to the same extent as others: 15...♘e7 16 a5 0-0 avoids any problems.

f) I don't like 15 g4 (no points), as after 15...♗g6 Black will get the chance, sooner or later, to create counterplay with ...h5.

15...♗e4

The simplest way of saving the piece is to play 15...h5, and then White should revert to the methods we've seen in the variations above: 16 ♘xf5 exf5 17 c4. The difference is that the inclusion of the moves h4 and ...h5 is to White's benefit: there is no need to worry about the back rank, and in cases where there is simplification into a bishop versus knight endgame, the pawn on h5 would be vulnerable. Clever. In any case, the thought of this was enough for Goryachkina to go for something else, but perhaps this wasn't wise.

16 ♗b5+

Three points. White has several ways to pursue the initiative.

16 h5 (*three points*) cramps Black's kingside, making it harder for the king and the king's rook to escape from the box: for example, 16...h6 17 ♘b5 ♔f8 18 ♘d6 ♘e7 19 c4, and so on.

16 ♘b5 (*three points*) will transpose to the line above after 16...♔f8 17 h5 h6, etc.

16 f3 (*three points*) 16...♗g6 17 c4 dxc4 18 ♗xc4 followed by displacing the king with ♗b5+ is also dangerous.

16...♔f8

17 f3

One point. Not strictly necessary, but it is nice to push the bishop back so that it blocks the g-pawn – then there are no unpleasant surprises with ...g5 to free the king.

17...♗g6

18 ♖e3

Four points. While Goryachkina's king's rook is incarcerated in the corner, the moment is right to bring this one into play on the other side of the board.

Instead, 18 c4 (*two points*) gives Black's forces more chances to emerge: 18...♘e7 19 cxd5 ♘xd5. In the meantime, Black threatens to play ...h5 and ...♔f8-g8-h7; a bit slow, but there is no obvious way for White to proceed. The knight on d5 holds things together.

The final round battle at the Women's Candidates in Kazan. Former world champion Mariya Muzychuk won powerfully as White, but Aleksandra Goryachkina qualified to face Ju Wenjun.

18...♘e7

19 ♖c3

Two points. A direct line into Black's position.

19 ♖a3 (*one point*) was less direct, but quite good: 19...h5 20 ♗d7 ♔g8 21 ♖xb6 and White still has the better chances.

19...h5

Instead of this, what about 19...♖c8? Answer on the next line.

White seizes the initiative with 20 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 21 ♖b3 (*two points*) followed by ♖c3 with tremendous compensation for the pawn.

20 ♖c7

One point. The position is already very difficult for Black considering that it isn't possible for the king to slip out around the corner.

20...a6

21 ♗d7

Three points. This keeps the most control in the position.

21 ♘c6 (*two points*) is also good, though White needs to find some big moves to keep the advantage: 21...axb5 22 ♘xe7 ♗h7 23 ♘c8, and here 23...g5!? gives Black a fighting chance.

Alternatively, 21 ♗e2 b5 isn't as clear as the game continuation.

21...b5

22 a4

Four points. It is essential that White keeps the initiative so that Black stays in the box.

22 ♖b3 (*two points*), potentially moving to a3 or c3, isn't too bad, but compared to the game it feels slow, and I would be concerned that 22...♘f5 would start the process of unravelling on the kingside.

22...bxa4

23 ♗xa4

One point. That's why it was best to put the bishop on d7 rather retreat down the a6-f1 diagonal.

23...♘f5

24 ♖a7

Five points. If 24...♖xa7, White wins with 25 ♖b8+ ♔e7 26 ♘c6+ ♔d7 27 ♘xa7+ ♔c7 28 ♖xa8.

The rook move is essential – otherwise Black has a hope of crawling out of the position. For example, 24 ♘xf5 ♗xf5, and then the king sneaks out via g8 and h7. The bishop can sit on g6 to protect the f7-pawn.

24 ♖cb7 ♔g8! is also fine for Black.

24...♖d8

Black is struggling whatever is played, but I think 24...♖c8 gives better chances of survival. White wins material with 25 ♗d7 ♘xd4 26 ♗xc8, but at least Black activates with 26...♔g8-h7 etc.

25 ♘c6

Two points.

25...♖e8

Instead of this, how would you play after 25...♖c8? Answer on the next line.

Take *two bonus points* if you got as far as 26 ♖c7 ♖a8 27 ♘b8 ♔g8 28 ♗c6.

26 ♘e7

Five points. The exploitation of the weak back rank is very neat. 26...♖xe7 27 ♖a8+ leads to mate, and 26...♘xe7 27 ♗xe8 is hopeless.

26...♖d8

27 ♘xg6+

One point.

27...fxg6

28 ♗d7

Three points. An elegant way forward.

28 ♖bb7 (*three points*) was more obvious, with the idea of g2-g4, pushing the knight and crashing through on g7. The problem with this method is that advancing pawns in front of the king can allow counterplay.

28...♔g8

28...♔f7 would have been met by 29 ♖bb7..

29 ♗xe6+

One point.

29...♔h7

30 ♖bb7

Two points. Threatening to take on f5 followed by g7.

30...♘d4

31 ♗d7

Four points. Even though the black rooks have been connected, the bishop dominates them, controlling the all-important e8-square.

This move shows great constraint. How many of us, having lined up the rooks on the seventh rank, would hack on g7 without a second thought? In fact, after 31 ♖xg7+ (no points) 31...♔h6 32 ♗h3 ♘c6, Black has decent chances to survive.

31...♖b8

32 e6

One point.

32...♘f5

33 ♗a4

Four points. This bishop has played a starring role in the game. Still maintaining control of the e8-square, it withdraws to a safe spot and prepares the way for the e-pawn to roll forward.

33...♖bc8

34 e7

One point.

34...♘d6

35 ♖b6

One point. The *same score* for 35 ♖d7.

35...♘e8

36 ♖bxa6

One point.

The *same score* for 36 ♗d7 – and now here is a nice line: 36...♖c7 37 ♗xe8 ♖xa7 38 ♗xg6+ ♔h6 39 g4, and mate follows.

36...♔g8

37 ♖a8

Three points. That's what I like: a nice, clean finish. Moves such as 37 ♗d7 or 37 ♖xg6 won't jeopardise the win, but they will certainly prolong it.

37...♖xa8

38 ♖xa8

One point.

38...♔f7

39 ♔f2

Two points. Subtle and strong at the same time – Black resigned (**1-0**). White smoothly transposes into a king and pawn endgame: if 39...♔xe7 40 ♔e3 ♖f8 41 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 42 ♗xe8 ♔xe8 43 ♔d4, with an extra pawn and an easy win.

With brilliancy prizes, one might expect a crashing attack on the enemy king. This game was somewhat different, but no less scintillating. The opening was well prepared (15 h4 was a clever and upsetting move); the middlegame was played with vigour (18 ♖e3-c3-c7); there were some elegant tactics (24 ♖a7 and 26 ♘e7); and an efficient finish. In other words – well deserved.

Now add up your points:

0-16	Unlucky
17-34	Average Club Player
35-43	Strong Club Player
44-50	FIDE Master
51-58	International Master
59-68	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

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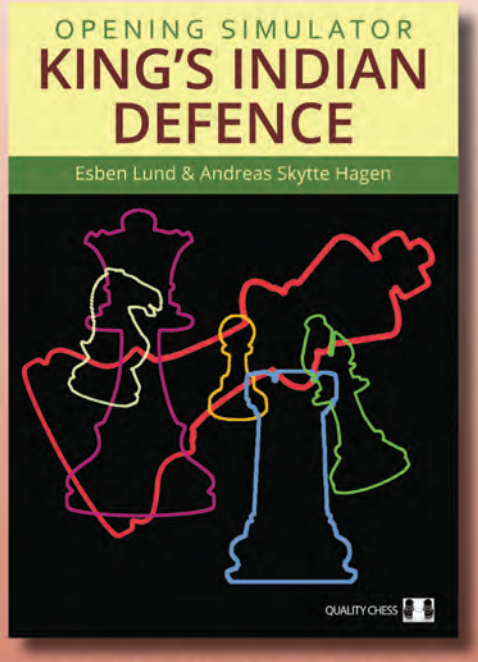

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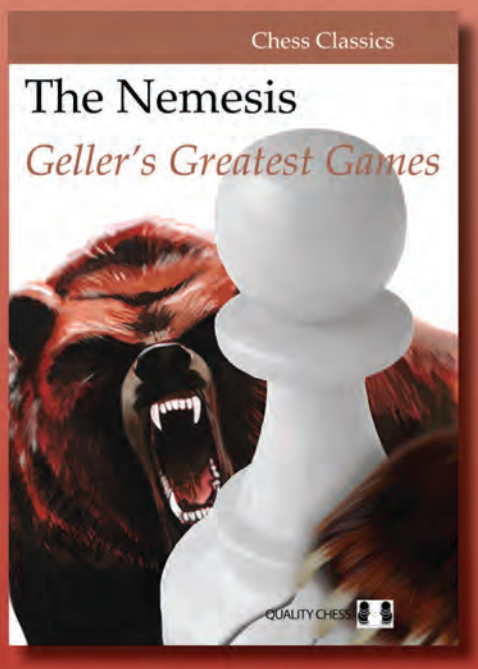

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Vera Menchik:
Challenging the Status Quo

It's 75 years since the death of Vera Menchik. Andrey Terekhov pays tribute

Vera Menchik occupies a special place in the history of chess. She was the first Women's World Chess Champion and held this title from 1927 until her tragic death during the war in 1944. Her domination in women's chess can be compared to that of Emanuel Lasker, who held the men's world championship title even longer, and to Alexander Alekhine, the only world champion other than Menchik to die on the throne.

Menchik is also famous for being the first woman to play in top-level men's tournaments. She paved the way for other women, such as Nona Gaprindashvili and Maia Chiburdanidze, who were able to compete with male grandmasters, and later Judit Polgar, who made it into the Top-10 and played in the FIDE World Championship tournament.

Yet Vera Menchik is almost forgotten today. This article, written on the 75th anniversary of her untimely death, strives to shed some light on Menchik's many historic achievements and explain why the efforts of the first Women's World Champion – both on and off the board – still matter.

Turbulent Teenage Years

Vera Menchik's story was far from ordinary from the beginning. She was born on 16th February 1906 in Moscow. Her father was Czech and her mother English, although only partially, as British newspapers dutifully pointed out. Both of her parents worked in Russia – her father as a manager of estates for wealthy families, her mother as a governess. Vera grew up speaking only Russian. Her parents did quite well, as they owned a house in Moscow and a mill. Vera went to a private girls' school. In 1913 she travelled to England, presumably to visit grandparents, and spent a month there (she mentioned this fact in an interview to *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 4 January 1924).

Everything changed with the Russian revolution of 1917. The Menchiks found themselves in the middle of a civil war and living under a regime which treated even moderate wealth with suspicion. The mill was confiscated. The family was required to share their house with others and eventually lost it altogether. Private schools were no more, so Vera had to switch to a public school. She described the challenging conditions of those years in a letter to *CHESS* (May 1943):

During the winter of 1919-20 the school I attended was for some time without water, heating or electric light, yet the classes went on and the students, clad in their fur-lined coats and hats, read by the light of a few flickering candles or an oil lamp, and then perhaps had an hour's walk home through the snow, for all traffic stopped after working hours.

It was in these difficult years that Menchik started to play chess. Her father taught her the rules when she was 9, and later she

played in a school tournament. In the autumn of 1921 the Menchiks finally left Russia. Her parents split at this point, Vera's father returning to Czechoslovakia and her mother arriving in England with her two daughters, Vera and Olga. They settled in St Leonards-on-Sea, a small town that is part of Hastings, where they lived in Vera's grandmother's house.

For the girls who grew up with the privations of post-Revolutionary Russia, England must have felt like a different planet. Vera later recalled what struck her the most when she first came to England: "The way the milk bottles can be left outside houses; that would be impossible in Russia – they would be stolen."

Time for Chess!

It was in England that Menchik took up chess in earnest. As she explained, part of the reason was her poor command of the language:

I have often been asked, what made me think seriously about chess? It would appear that the atmosphere of silence and heavy smoking is not appropriate for a young lady. That's true! In other life circumstances it would not occur to me to spend time in such a way, but chess is a quiet game and therefore the best hobby for a person who cannot speak the language properly.

In 1924 Vera joined Hastings Chess Club and put in a lot of work into studying chess. She also started taking private lessons. Her first chess coach was a local player, John A.J. Drewitt, who taught her the closed openings. Later she studied with the illustrious Geza Maroczy, who was a local resident and member of Hastings Chess Club at the time. *The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer* (25 April 1925) mentions that Menchik played about 20 games against the grandmaster. Maroczy was a great positional player and had a tremendous impact on Menchik's playing style.

At first Menchik mostly played in the club competitions and team matches, making steady progress from the bottom boards to the top ones. She was lucky to live in a town that was famous for its chess tournaments. In 1923/24 Menchik made her first appearance in one of the lower groups of the Hastings Christmas Congress, and she quickly climbed through the ranks. By 1926/27 Menchik had tied with Philip Stuart Milner-Barry for first place in the Major Reserve section, her first victory in a men's tournament. Then in 1929/30 she debuted in the Premier tournament, which was the first of her six appearances in the top section at Hastings.

Women's World Champion

By this point Menchik had already established herself as the strongest woman player in the world. She won the inaugural Women's World Chess Championship that took place in July 1927 in London, on the sidelines of the first Chess Olympiad, with the impressive score of +10 =1 -0. The Women's Championship was a relatively low-key affair and only in November 1929 did Menchik receive a gold medal and a cup for this victory. The cup, presented by Lady Margaret Hamilton Russell, was intended to be held by the current Women's World Champion. It was the second of the famous Hamilton Russell Cups; the first of which still serves as the main prize at each Olympiad.

The prestige of Women's World Championships and the level of play gradually increased in the years that followed, but Menchik always remained head and shoulders above the competition. She successfully defended her title in six more championship tournaments and one match, winning most of them by a large margin. Three times – at Folkstone 1933, Warsaw 1935 and Stockholm 1937 – she swept the championships clean, twice with a score of 14/14 and once with 9/9. In total, Menchik scored 91½ points out of 99 games that she played in Women's World Championships, losing only three games over 12 years.

The only serious challenge to Menchik's supremacy in women's chess was mounted by the talented German player Sonja Graf. They played a short friendly match in 1934 and another one for the World Championship title in 1937 (Menchik won both). The closest Graf came to the title was at the 1939 World Championship tournament, where she finished two points behind Menchik, but only after losing a winning position in their head-to-head encounter.

Here is a fragment from their 1937 World Championship match.

Only two years after joining Hastings Chess Club, Vera Menchik's rapid rise has begun as she is pictured in January 1926 giving a simul at the Imperial Chess Club, London (Gallica Archives).

V.Menchik-S.Graf
14th matchgame, Semmering 1937

20...♘g4?

Setting the stage for the greatest combination of Vera Menchik's career. Black's position already looks shaky and for the last 80 years annotators have considered this position to be winning for White, but the computer suggests that with the brave 20...♕xc4! Black could have held things together.

21 ♖d7!! 1-0

A bolt from the blue, which led to immediate resignation. The idea behind the rook sacrifice should become clear from the following variation: 21 ♕xh5? ♕xh2+! 22 ♕xh2 ♘xh2 and Black escapes to an endgame only a pawn down. However, after the preliminary deflection 21 ♖d7! ♕xd7 now 22 ♕xh5! works like a clockwork. Black no longer has the saving counter-sacrifice ...♕xh2+ and thus mate is inevitable: 22...gxh5 23 ♗h7# or 22...♘f6 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♕h7#

Menchik kept on playing in the Women's World Championship until the end of her life, but from the late 1920s her primary focus was on men's competitions. In 1928 she successfully played in a few tournaments in England and scored her first victories over acknowledged masters. By the end of that year, she was able to hold her own against the English men: she scored 50% at Scarborough and '+1' at the BCF Open in Tenby.

Her breakthrough came in 1929, when she tied with Akiba Rubinstein for second place at a tournament in Ramsgate, finishing only half a point behind Capablanca and ahead of her former coach Maroczy and several other masters. It was a Scheveningen style competition, in which a British team was pitted against the overseas visitors. Vera Menchik played for the international side and faced the British players, led by Sir George Thomas and Frederick Yates.

The final standings at Ramsgate leave no doubt as to how the teams stacked up against each other: the highest-scoring Briton, Sir George Thomas, scored only 3½/7, and finished in seventh place overall. Of course, Menchik would have found it much tougher had she had to play against Capablanca, Rubinstein and Maroczy instead of the English masters. Nevertheless, her result was a sensation, and on the wave of her success she received invitations to two major international tournaments, a small round-robin in Paris and then Carlsbad 1929, arguably the strongest chess tournament since the end of World War I.

A First Super-Tournament

Carlsbad 1929 featured an incredibly strong line-up: Capablanca, Rubinstein, Euwe, Nimzowitsch, Bogoljubov, Tartakower, Marshall, etc. Of the strongest players in the world, only Alekhine and Lasker were absent. The tournament turned out to be the highlight of Aron Nimzowitsch's career – he finished clear first with an impressive 15/21.

It was a first super-tournament for Menchik, and everyone expected her to finish last. The only question was how many points, if any, she would be able to score. Salo Flohr recalled the atmosphere of Carlsbad 1929 in an article that was published in the Soviet journal *64* several decades later (no.4/1983):

There are always plenty of big mouths among the chess players. There were many of them at Carlsbad as well. Austrians are fond of jokes and humor. Thus, the witty (late) Hans Kmoch imprudently declared before the tournament started: "If Menchik scores more than three points, I am entering women ballet!"

Menchik must have felt sorry for Kmoch: she scored exactly three points. However, she did not spare another Viennese, Albert Becker, who is 86 now and lives in Buenos Aires. I attended the tournament as a journalist. The atmosphere was friendly. Many of the participants were gathering after the games in the café Schützenhaus. It was there after the first round that the smiling Professor Becker made the following proposal: "Gentlemen, I have a great idea. I suggest forming a club named after Vera Menchik. Those who will manage to lose a game to her will become full members of the club. Those who draw will only be considered as candidates for membership."

Guess what? In the third round Becker lost to the Women's World Champion. You can imagine the laughter in the evening. Someone said: "Congratulations, Professor Becker! You are hereby elected as the President of Vera Menchik Club!"

Vera Menchik did not just win that game – she produced a masterpiece of positional play.

V.Menchik-A.Becker
Carlsbad 1929
Dutch Defence

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 c6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 e3 ♘e4

Black's play in the opening looks a bit like coffee house chess, but in the early 20th century this line was quite common and played by Breyer, Grünfeld and Reti, among others.

6 ♗d3 f5 7 ♘e5 ♕h4 8 0-0 ♘d7 9 f4

The simplest way to keep Black's attacking intentions in check, although it does not promise much in terms of an opening advantage.

9...♗e7 10 ♗d2

Curiously, this position occurred again in a later round of the same tournament. That encounter saw 10 ♖f3 ♘xe5 11 dxe5 ♗c5 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♗d2 ♘xd2 14 ♕xd2 with a balanced position in Colle-Maroczy, Carlsbad 1929.

10...♘xe5 11 dxe5

11...♗c5?!

Black must have been concerned for the safety of the queen on h4. However, moving the bishop twice is a high price for creating an escape route for the queen, especially since the bishop will also come under fire on c5.

11...0-0 12 ♗e1 ♕h6 13 ♖f3 should not scare Black at all. Either 13...♕h5! or 13...♖d8 14 ♖h3 ♕g6 15 ♗e2 ♕f7 promises him reasonable play.

12 ♗xe4 fxe4 13 ♕b3 ♕d8?!

Another move that could have been avoided. However, to play 13...0-0! Black had to realise that 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 ♘xd5? could be refuted by 15...♕d8! 16 ♗b4 ♕xd5 17 ♕xd5 ♗xe3+! 18 ♔h1 exd5 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 and wins. It was not obvious even to annotators: for example, Elisaveta Bykova gives the line ending with 15 ♘xd5 as the reason why 13...0-0 could not be played. In any case, after 13...0-0 White could still play 14 ♘a4! ♗e7 15 ♗b4 with the same ideas as in the game.

14 ♘a4 ♗e7 15 ♗b4 b6 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 cxd5 exd5?

17...cxd5, followed by ...0-0 and ...♗a6, was enough for equality, but as we know, Black was playing for a win.

18 ♖ac1 ♗b7 19 ♘c3!

Suddenly it turns out that Black cannot castle in either direction: 19...0-0? 20 ♘xe4 or 19...0-0-0 20 ♘xd5.

19...♕f7

Here and over the next few moves Becker does an impressive job defending a difficult position.

20 ♕b4! ♖d8

20...0-0-0? is still suicidal. This time because of 21 ♘b5 ♔b8 22 ♘d6, while after 20...♕e7? White has another tactical shot: 21 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 22 ♘xd5+! cxd5 23 ♖c7+ ♔e6 24 ♖xb7 and wins.

21 ♖fd1 ♗a8

The immediate 21...♕e7 runs into 22 ♕a4!, attacking the a7- and d5-pawns simultaneously, and so Black defends the a-pawn in advance.

22 h3 ♕e7 23 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 24 b4!

Black has survived the first wave of attack, but he is still worse. His pawn structure is immobile, and the bishop is out of play. Menchik now slowly increases the pressure.

24...♖d7 25 ♖d2 ♖hd8?!

After this tentative move White wins almost on autopilot. 25...♖c8 also did not work, as White could then respond with 26 ♘b5! (this motif will resurface later in the game).

Knowing how the rest of the game played out, it is tempting to suggest drastic actions, such as 25...c5 26 bxc5 bxc5 27 ♘b5 a6 28 ♘d6 ♖xd6 29 exd6+ ♔xd6 when Black is likely lost anyway, but at least White still has some work to do.

26 ♘e2 ♖c8 27 ♖dc2 ♖dc7 28 ♘d4

The participants of the 1929 Carlsbad tournament. Notice the separation between Vera Menchik (enlarged, right) and the rest of the players.

Just in time to prevent the ...c6-c5 push, as if 28...c5? 29 ♘b5 and White wins either c5-pawn or the exchange

28...g6 29 ♘b5! ♖d7 30 ♔f2

Preparing to open the classic second front on the kingside.

30...h6 31 g4 a6 32 ♘d4 ♖dc7 33 f5

Black is completely helpless. All his pieces are tied to the weakness on c6 and the lone king cannot stop the steady advance of the white pawns.

33...g5 34 ♔g3 ♗b7 35 h4 gxh4+ 36 ♔xh4 ♔f7 37 ♔h5 a5?

This merely hastens the inevitable end.

38 bxa5 bxa5 39 ♘b5! ♖d7 40 e6+ 1-0

Professor Becker resigned and thus became the founding member of the Vera Menchik Club.

Praise from Alekhine

In the end, Menchik only scored three points from 21 games at Carlsbad, but her performance was still regarded a success. Alexander Alekhine, who wrote a series of articles on the tournament for *The New York Times*, wrote the following at the end of round 15:

I have suspended final judgment so far about Miss Vera Menchik of Russia, because the greatest caution and objectivity in criticism are necessary regarding any one so extraordinary. However, after fifteen games it is certain that she is an absolute exception in her sex. She is so highly talented for chess that with further work and experience at tournaments she will surely succeed in developing from her present stage of an average player into a high-classed international champion.

She indisputably has attained her three points against the strong masters, but it is little known to the public that she also has attained superior positions against Euwe, Treybal, Colle and Dr. Vidmar. She was beaten by Dr. Vidmar only after a nine-hour match. It is the chess world's duty to grant her every possibility for development.

The World Champion's call was heard, and Menchik continued to receive invitations to men's competitions. At her next tournament, Barcelona 1929, she scored seven points from 14 games, securing the last of the eight prizes. It was hailed as the first time a woman had won a prize in a master-level tournament.

Over the next 15 years Menchik played in a few dozen tournaments with the men. Typically, she would finish in the lower half of the table in the stronger tournaments, such as Hastings or Margate, but usually with a few victories over masters and sometimes a grandmaster scalp or two to her name: for example, she defeated both Max Euwe and Mir Sultan Khan at Hastings 1931/32.

However, in second-tier tournaments Menchik would often finish at the top. She claimed clear first at the British Chess Federation Major Open in 1931 with an unbeaten 9/11, finishing ahead of several masters, such as Broadbent, Znosko-Borovsky and Golombek. The next year she again scored 9/11 in the Major Open, but this time finished second, because George Koltanowski outdid her with 9½ points.

Menchik never made it to the level of the top grandmasters of the time. She routinely lost to the strongest players, but that only gave her occasional victories or draws more weight. For example, Menchik only scored three draws at Moscow 1935, losing the other 16 games. However, her draw with Salo Flohr played a big role in the final table, as Flohr failed to secure clear first prize, instead sharing it with Mikhail Botvinnik.

Menchik's results could have been better, but for her chronic weakness in tactics. She could blunder anything to anyone, but she was not unique in that. In fact, it was the main difference between grandmasters and masters in pre-war years: grandmasters were more consistent, while regular masters were prone to bouts of tactical blindness.

Blundering was one of the reasons behind Menchik's horrible score against the top grandmasters (0/9 against Capablanca, 0/8 versus Alekhine and 1½/10 with Flohr). However, she did much better against the leading British masters and she often finished above them in tournaments (+2=4 vs C.H.O'D. Alexander; +1-4=4 vs H. Golombek;

+4-1=4 vs R.P. Michell; +5-3=8 vs P.S. Milner-Barry; +3-4=4 vs E.G. Sergeant; +10-6=13 vs Sir G.A. Thomas; +5-7=4 vs W. Winter; +2-3=5 vs F.D. Yates). These results would have probably qualified Menchik for the Men's International Master title, if only she had lived until 1950 when IM titles were first awarded by FIDE.

A Foreigner in Britain

Despite living in England for many years, Menchik was considered a foreigner until the late 1930s and was thus ineligible for the national competitions. In fact, Menchik's citizenship brought her complications for most of her life. When she won her first World Championship title, the British newspapers referred to her as a "Russian refugee". In the above-mentioned quotation from 1929 Alekhine referred to Menchik as a Russian, although in most tournaments she was already listed as Czechoslovakian, the country of her father. Menchik even played in two Czechoslovakian Men's Championships, in 1933 and 1936.

Vera Menchik finally became a British citizen after marrying Rufus H.S. Stevenson in 1937. Her husband was 28 years her senior and was deeply involved in chess as a player, tournament organiser and later worked for *British Chess Magazine*. It was the second marriage for Mr. Stevenson. Incidentally, his first wife, Agnes Stevenson, was also a chess player who participated in three Women's Championships. She died in a macabre incident on the way to her fourth World Championship: she walked into an aircraft propeller at Poznan airport.

Vera Menchik's marriage lasted only a few years, as Stevenson suffered from ill health and died in 1943. It was a happy marriage and Vera Menchik was deeply distressed after her husband's death. Sadly she outlived her husband by less than a year. On 26th June 1944 a German V-1 flying bomb hit the London house where Vera lived together with her sister and the mother, instantly killing all three of them.

In the aftermath of her death, chess journals in Britain and all over the world printed obituaries and articles about Vera Menchik. However, she was neither the first nor the last world champion to die during or immediately after the war – Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine all passed away in the 1940s – and Menchik's name quickly faded from public memory.

One might expect that a great number of articles and books were published about her, but unfortunately this is not the case. The first major biography of Vera Menchik was published in 1957 by another Women's World Champion, Elisaveta Bykova (in Russian). For almost 60 years it was the only book about Vera Menchik, but then in 2016 two different biographies of Vera Menchik appeared – one by Robert B. Tanner, published by McFarland (in English), the other by Jan Kalendovsky (in Czech).

This is a big step forward, but still it is safe to assume that few people have access to these books or have seen any games of Vera Menchik. One cannot help but wonder why so little has been written about the best female player of the first half of the 20th century.

I believe that Vera Menchik still suffers from a biased perception that can be traced all the way back to 1930s and the initial reaction to her performances in the men's tournaments. At a time when women were still largely looked down upon and did not even have voting rights in many countries, the appearance of a strong woman chess player challenged the status quo. No wonder that press treated Menchik's participation in the men's tournaments as a sensation – it was almost scandalous.

In the 1930s, most men were all too happy to downplay Menchik's successes and to laugh at her failures. Menchik's style was routinely called "dull" or "boring". Her victories over the famous grandmasters would always appear in the chess journals, but few of her games against the lesser mortals did. And of course, the whole idea of the 'Menchik Club' is inherently sexist and degrading. It did not occur to anyone to suggest, say, forming a 'Sir George Thomas Club', even though Vera Menchik had a large plus against this British master.

Oddly, even other women sometimes joined in ridiculing Menchik, perhaps unwittingly. There is an often-recounted story that after Max Euwe's second loss to Menchik, his wife came to the tournament hall to check that Euwe's losses were not romantically motivated. Whether this story was true or not, it certainly succeeded in landing a punch against both the mind and the appearance of the Women's World Champion.

Finally, it did not help that Menchik was considered a foreigner in every country that she had a connection with. Britain never completely accepted her because she was not born there, she could not speak Czech despite representing that country in tournaments, and she was not Russian, despite speaking the language from birth. Menchik did not belong anywhere she went. She was the ultimate outsider and that is largely why she was not championed by any country even posthumously.

All these circumstances conspired to make Menchik a target of constant scorn and ridicule, which she withstood stoically, thanks to her naturally calm and reserved temperament. However, they must have taken a toll. We shall never know how many points it all cost her and what she could have achieved if she did not have to endure such indignities. The additional handicaps that Menchik had to overcome are rarely mentioned, but they make her achievements all the more impressive.

Vera Menchik paved the way for women in chess, and she did it a time when it was almost impossible. Sadly her aspiration of women playing chess on par with men has still to be fully realised today, and that is why the lessons of Vera Menchik's life and games are as relevant today as they were 75 years ago.

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in June

1	=	Reti Opening	*164 games*
2	⇧	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	*128 games*
3	⇩	Caro-Kann Defence	*128 games*
4	⇩	King's Indian Defence	*106 games*
5	⇧	Slav Defence	*100 games*
6	⇩	Queen's Gambit Declined	*96 games*
7	⇩	Sicilian Najdorf	*83 games*
8	⇧	Nimzo-Indian Defence	*83 games*
9	⇩	English, 1...e5	*72 games*
10	⇧	English, 1...♘f6	*66 games*
11	⇩	Sicilian, 2 Nf3 sidelines	*63 games*
12	⇧	Queen's Indian Defence	*59 games*
13	⇧	Catalan Opening	*51 games*
14	⇩	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	*47 games*
15	⇧	English, 1...e6	*46 games*
16	⇩	English, 1...c5	*46 games*
17	⇧	1 d4 d5 sidelines	*46 games*
18	⇩	Ruy Lopez, Berlin Def.	*44 games*
19	⇧	Grünfeld Def. Classical var.	*44 games*
20	⇧	Sicilian, Kan variation	*39 games*

2,507 games played between 1-30 June where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC.
Compiled by *HIARCS 14*.

In association with
HIARCS Chess Explorer - hiarcs.com
and *The Week in Chess* -- theweekinchess.com

A New Initiative

The Teesside International Women's Invitational Tournament promoted chess and saw the players compete for the Vera Menchik Memorial Trophy. Sean Marsh reports

"English chess needs to reinvent and reinvigorate itself to make it attractive to new players both in a social and competitive arena, and we need to do more and more to encourage women of all ages to play socially and competitively."
Chris Fegan, ECF Director of Women's Chess

"Chris, I have an idea..."

I spend a lot of time planning and creating new chess events on Teesside. Some will be one-offs and others will build up a significant history over the course of many years. This October, for example, we will have the 25th Yarm Chess Championships, for school teams on Teesside, which is a significant milestone.

Amongst the plans I had for this year was a particularly ambitious one, which would require a considerable amount of preparation and organisation. It also needed financial support.

The new event wasn't going to be on the scale of Teesside's famous grandmaster event of 1972, which was one Gerry Walsh's greatest successes. That event, which was won by Bent Larsen ahead of a whole range of GMs and IMs, including Ljubojevic, Portisch and Gligoric, remains our area's high watermark for international chess events. 1972 was, of course, an extremely important year for chess. The boom created by the Fischer-Spassky match brought widespread awareness to the game and the connections still run deep. It was for the Christmas of that year that I received my first-ever chess set and I can reveal one of the competitors of our new event was born that very same year.

This new event did, however, bring something brand new to Teesside: a women's international tournament. Certainly, we had enjoyed visits by very notable guest stars – including WIM Sarah Longson and WIM Natasha Regan – for other special events in the past, but the idea for a tournament was definitely new. Furthermore, the tournament itself was only one part of my plan for the week. I wanted the players to spend a second full day on Teesside to work with groups of our children.

For various reasons, I never like to announce plans until they are fully-formed and ready to roll, so it wasn't until 3rd June, just two weeks before the event, when I revealed the details across the usual social media platforms. I stated the four main aims for the event:

The Famous Five on Teesside- Rayelynn, Raphaële, Jo, Gulbahor and Agnieszka - with an appropiately attired event organiser Sean Marsh. Chess Links at their strongest!

i. To create a new international tournament.
ii. To impact and influence the school children and community of Teesside.
iii. To raise the profile of women's chess and provide the children with excellent role models.
iv. To celebrate the contribution of overseas women to English chess.

The players, the funding, the venue, the children and the trophy were all ready for action. It is never easy putting together such a jigsaw when each piece is equally important. It takes great determination and careful planning. Here is how the various pieces found their places on the board...

Funding was an important aspect of this event. I wanted to offer the players transport and accommodation costs. I would then cover the cost of the trophy, medals and sundry other aspects myself. It is extremely unlikely I would have found the necessary funding without the assistance of Chris Fegan, the ECF Director of Women's Chess.

Chris and I always work very closely together. I learn a lot from him and he has the fortunate habit of getting the best out of me. Chris is in his first year as Director of Women's Chess and I knew he would be looking to make an immediate impact in the role. This plan wouldn't have become a reality without the help of Chris, who secured the necessary funds from the ECF to enable it to move forward.

I had invited the players several months earlier and all five of my original choices had confirmed their places: Gulbahor Hamdamova (Uzbekistan), Jo Hutchinson (England), Agnieszka Milewska (Poland), Rayelynn Posadas (Philippines) and Raphaële Schmitz-Hastings (France).

Only Agnieszka and Rayelynn had played each other prior to the event (with a score of 1-1). It was an intriguing mix of people, nationalities and personalities, all of whom would bring their own unique qualities to the two days. Raphaële was bravely making her competitive debut.

As I wanted the actual tournament to take up just one of the two days, I opted for an all-play-all format with 30 minutes on each clock. Sean Cassidy, the current Chairperson

of the Cleveland Chess Association and one of the most supportive people I have ever known, was also on hand for the two days. One of his roles was to play the spare player in each of the five rounds, although his results did not count towards the final tally.

The players were competing for the Vera Menchik Memorial Trophy. As readers of this issue will be very much aware, during her short life Vera Menchik became a role model and inspiration for female chess players everywhere, with her regular appearances at the famous Hastings tournament having a particular impact on chess in England.

The trophy for the Women's Chess Olympiad is called the Vera Menchik Cup and Vera had a further honour bestowed upon her when she was inducted to the World Chess Hall of Fame in 2011.

I had several potential venues in mind and offered the event to The Links Primary School first. The Links was one of my very first schools; I started teaching chess there back in 1988 and we built it up to become the number one place for chess on Teesside throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s. We had 24-hour fund-raising chess marathons, chess discos and regular schools of chess running through the summer, Easter and Christmas holidays. There was also the highly productive two-year partnership with Teesside High School, funded by the Department for Education and Skills ('DfES') Building Bridges project, which had the aim of connecting private and state schools for combined ventures.

Chess went quiet there for nearly 15 years, but has since returned to the fold. Headteacher Louise Daly (appointed as a class teacher during my eight-year stint as a school governor) was fully supportive of this new plan and I enjoyed the assistance and understanding of all the members of staff. It felt very good indeed to be able to bring a major new event to The Links after a gap of so many years.

When it comes to schools' chess, most areas have trouble keeping their girls as keen as boys. On Teesside this has not been a problem for the last 30 years. Our tournaments show a very healthy percentage of both boys and girls, with the latter frequently outscoring the former. There are many reasons for this, including special girls initiatives I put into place at the start of my time in junior chess and the emergence of a significant number of girls who are not afraid to try tournaments and who act as role models for their friends at their respective schools.

Everything was now ready and Chris put out a rallying statement:

"This is a fantastic new initiative which I am delighted to support and highlights the contribution made by overseas women to English chess over decades and keeps alive the spirit of Vera Menchik. The event is the type of example of new innovate and 'out of the box' thinking that is needed in English chess to move the game forward in England and to try to stop the decline of the game which we have seen in recent times."

Rayelynn shares her chess secrets with an enthralled Links pupil. The second day was chess heaven for the children of years 4, 5 and 6, who were undoubtedly inspired by the whole event.

An appearance on Radio Tees the day before the start of the tournament added to the excitement of the build-up.

We had already had a big junior event at the Links on the day the players arrived on Teesside. Over 60 children had been in the school hall, competing in the 9th CSC Team Championship (which resulted in a tie for first place between Billingham South and Westgarth). Fellow CSC tutor Richard Harris and I met Gulbahor, Agnieszka and Raphaële at the railway station and introduced them to Teesside with a short walk along the River Tees and a trip to one of Yarm's many restaurants. Rayelynn was already on Teesside and Jo arrived later in the evening, but was, however, the first of the players to arrive at The Links on the morning of the event.

Suddenly, after months of planning, it was time for the games to begin. Aga started the tournament with a powerful victory, but the game between Jo and Rayelynn kept everybody guessing until the very end.

J.Hutchinson-R.Posadas
Stockton-on-Tees (rapid) 2019
London System

1 d4 d5 2 ♗f4

The London is more popular now than ever, especially since lines delaying the development of the king's knight were found to create problems for Black. It is still possible to head for a dull game in the London, but Jo always prefers to take an aggressive stance, usually involving queenside castling.

2...♘f6 3 e3 ♗f5

Black needs to be careful with the development of this bishop. Indeed, White can now switch to a good version of the Queen's Gambit with an early c2-c4, the point being that the queen can emerge on b3 to attack the light squares on Black's queenside, which may end up missing the support of the bishop.

4 ♘d2

Jo prefers to keep play within the world of the London, if not with peaceful intentions.

4...e6 5 ♘gf3 c5 6 c3 c4

Rayelynn seizes space on the queenside and prevents White's bishop from reaching its most natural position on d3. This is a double-edged idea though: the c4-pawn could be challenged by b2-b3 or weakened by an eventual e3-e4.

7 ♘e5 ♘bd7 8 g4

No messing around here.

8...♘xe5 9 dxe5

9 gxf5 could be the better of the two captures, but the move played is interesting as it offers a pawn to force the knight away from the centre.

9...♘xg4 10 h3 ♘h6

It is not so easy to see how the knight will be able to rejoin the battle and meanwhile the

light squares in Black's camp will start to look shaky over the next few moves.

11 ♕a4+ ♕d7 12 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 13 0-0-0 b5

Defending against the threat of 14 ♘xc4, but pawn moves cost development time and White now seizes the initiative.

14 e4 ♗g6 15 exd5 exd5 16 ♗g2 ♔e6

The king has to personally take care of some of the trouble but this allows a shot...

17 ♘f3

...which White decides not to take. 17 ♘xc4! would unleash the bishop upon d5 and leave Black in trouble. Jo was after the king rather than the pawns though, which is a perfectly reasonable approach. Both players were already getting low on time – and the king's journey is far from over.

17...♗c5 18 ♘g5+

18 ♖xd5 was another shot worth firing: 18...♔xd5? 19 ♘g5+ would then force checkmate (19...♗e4 20 ♗xe4 mate), but Black could try the strange resource 18...♗e3+, freeing c5 as an eventual flight square for the hyperactive king.

18...♔f5

A remarkable concept. The king attacks three pieces and they cannot all be saved.

19 ♗d2

This looks, at first glance, to be the best of White's options, letting go of the e5-pawn, but keeping Black's king in danger. However, 19 ♗g3 was worth a try. After 19...♔xg5 20 ♖xd5 Black would not have time to save the bishop with 20...♗b6 due to the threat of 21 f4+ ♔f5 22 e6+ with a crushing attack.

19...♔xe5 20 ♖he1+ ♔f6 21 ♗xd5 ♖ad8 22 ♗e4

White could also try 22 ♗c6 to test the resilience of the queenside pawns. As played the bishop offers its opposite number the invitation for a little dance.

22...♗h5 23 ♗f3 ♗g6 24 ♗e4 ♗b6 25 ♗xg6 fxg6 26 ♘e4+ ♔f7 27 ♘g5+ ♔g8

The king has been walking a thin tightrope for some time and it is ironic that just when he seems to have found sanctuary his position leads to more trouble. The logical continuation of 27...♔f6 28 ♘e4+ would have led to a draw.

28 ♗e3

A strong move. Black, with a rook and knight both sidelined on the extremities of the kingside, will struggle to match White's piece activity

28...♗xe3+ 29 fxe3 ♖f8 30 ♖d7 ♘f7

31 ♘xf7

A slip, letting Black off the hook. Both 31 ♘e6 and 31 ♖f1 would have considerably intensified the pressure.

31...♖xf7 32 ♖d8+ ♖f8 33 ♖ed1 ♔f7

Rayelynn is an extremely resourceful player. There was very little time left on either clock now and both players had to play quickly and instinctively. The threat of 34 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 35 ♖d8+ is difficult to meet when under pressure, but Rayelynn found the only way. The downside is that the black king has to set off another dangerous journey.

34 ♖8d7+ ♔f6 35 ♖xa7 ♖e8

I was watching carefully, but it was very difficult to work out what was happening. With the moves being dashed out quickly the position flickered and changed too much to apply serious spectator analysis. A lot of pawns have the potential to drop off and with four rooks still on the board, checkmates and repetitions are never off the agenda.

36 ♖f1+ ♔g5 37 ♖f3 ♖e5 38 ♖xg7 h5 39 ♖g3+ ♔h4 40 ♖7xg6 ♖he8 41 ♖f3 ♖g5

41...♖xe3 would have maintained equality, but perhaps Rayelynn saw some ghosts around her king, prompting her to seek an exchange of rooks. Unfortunately, this is a blunder...

42 ♖gf6 ...but Jo misses her chance. 42 ♖f4+ would win a rook in broad daylight.

42...♖g1+ Game on again! **43 ♔d2 ♖eg8 44 ♖6f4+ ♔g5 45 e4 ♔h6 46 ♖f6+ ♔h7 47 ♖3f5 ♖8g2+ 48 ♔e3**

And there was no more time for me to record any more moves. After further adventures Jo queened a pawn, cornered Rayelynn's king and then...lost on time, two moves from a forced checkmate. What a battle.

During the school playtime, the tournament games went on as normal, but it gave me the time and opportunity to invite a small group of children into the room to watch players in action. It was very good for them to see the concentration of the players, as well as them writing down the moves and using the chess clocks. Additionally, I saw Louise showing a prospective new parent around the school and called them both into the chess room. The very fact that we could casually announce we were having an international chess tournament going on at The Links must have made a very good impression.

Agnieszka kept the pace going in the second round, effectively ending Jo's title hopes at the same time with a destructive sacrifice.

A.Milewska-J.Hutchinson
Stockton-on-Tees (rapid) 2019

26 ♗xg6! and the attack crashed through: **26...hxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 28 ♖f7 1-0**

In fact Agnieszka was on top form all day and won all of her games comfortably, except the friendly encounter with Sean Cassidy in the last round, which ended in a draw. This was more than enough to earn the inaugural title and to take home the Vera Menchik Memorial trophy.

Meanwhile, Rayelynn played very creative chess in all of her games, but made an early error in the crunch encounter against the eventual winner. Jo recovered very well from her early defeats to bounce back with fine victories. Gulbahor and Raphaële played very well too, but didn't manage to consistently put together the points required to challenge for top honours.

Gulbahor found herself needing to push for a win in every round to try and catch up with the leader and she definitely had her chances in the game against Jo.

J.Hutchinson-G.Hamdamova
Stockton-on-Tees (rapid) 2019

30 moves in and the position is very complicated. The board is ablaze, but Black's attack is the stronger of the two. The threat is to keep on pushing the a4-pawn. Jo trades queens, which is the best try, but this doesn't take away the pressure.

31 ♕xb3 cxb3 32 ♖eh1 a3 33 ♔b1 a2+ 34 ♔a1 ♖cc7 35 ♖h6

At the time I thought 35 g6 would be worth a try, but the cold-blooded 35...♖g7 would have solved Black's problems. It is then hard to see how the white king will ever be able to tunnel its way to freedom, meaning Black would retain a significant advantage.

35...a4

It would have been better to protect e6 first, but by now time trouble and excitement were influencing matters.

36 ♖xe6 a3 37 ♖a6 ♖a7 38 ♖xa7 ♗xa7

Once Jo's rook became more active, having captured on e6, it was able to contribute significantly to the defence of her king, by moving behind the dangerous pawns and then swapping off some of Gulbahor's attacking potential. The game is back in the balance, but curiously Black's queenside pawns are now actually starting to look a little on the weak side, although rounding them up is not an easy task.

39 bxa3 ♗c5 40 ♗c1 ♖a7 41 ♖d1 ♗xa3 42 ♗xa3 ♖xa3 43 ♔b2 ♖a6 44 f5

44...♔g7

It was fascinating to watch this battle unfold. Which pawns are weak? Which passed pawns are strong and sustainable?

45 f6+ ♔f7 46 ♖a1 ♔e6 47 ♔xb3 ♔xe5 48 ♖xa2

White has made some progress, but Black should definitely keep the rooks on the board as the pawn ending is clearly lost. They both had to play too quickly by now though and inertia was taking its toll.

48...♖xa2? 49 ♔xa2 ♔e6 50 ♔b2 ♔f7 51 ♔b3 ♔g6 52 ♔b4 ♔f7 53 ♔c5 ♔e6 54 ♔d4 ♔f5 55 f7 ♔xg5 56 f8♕ ♔g6 57 ♔xd5 1-0

The chess action had still not finished for the day. After a break for tea, the players reconvened at The Buffs Chess Club to play two rounds of rapidplay chess against a team of local players. The Buffs had just finished their most successful season on Teesside, having won the B Division, finished second in the C Division and reached the final of the Tom Wise Knockout Cup, but the women eventually won the match by 6-4 (3-2 in both rounds).

Louise had very kindly granted me an assembly slot at The Links on the Friday morning, which enabled me to explain to the children about the event and to formally introduce the players to everyone. I then had six of the top Links players come out to present medals to each of the players and the Vera Menchik trophy to Agnieszka. The latter then made an impromptu speech to praise the school and children, highlighting the presence of so many girl players.

The day continued with small groups of children coming to the chess room to play against the stars and receive informal coaching. Agnieszka made special visits to the Year 5 and Year 6 classrooms to share some of her chess knowledge. We impacted on every child in Years 4, 5 and 6 over the course of the day; that is the whole of Key Stage 2.

All too soon it was time to say goodbye to our very special visitors. They had been magnificent with the children and they held universal praise for the school, the standard of play and the excellent concentration of the stars of the future.

The event had achieved every one of my aims. The impact on the children and indeed the community will be recognised for many years to come.

Meanwhile, immediately after waving off the players it was time to start preparing for the next event – a *Game Changer* day at Yarm School, featuring Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan, as a follow-up to last year's hugely successful *Chess for Life* event. But that is another story...

Thank you to everyone who helped to make our new event such a great success. I will leave the last word to my great friend and colleague, while noting we have made a very significant start.

"It is vital that we promote chess as a game for women and to help do so we need to move away from the old style, outdated and outmoded image – and, indeed, often reality – of chess as something played by middle-aged men in the upstairs back rooms of back street pubs." – Chris Fegan.

Women's Chess Month

John White reports from Hammersmith

Hammersmith CC has been on a bit of an odyssey in the past five years – a journey that has seen membership go up from the nadir of 19 members to now approaching 100. This has been achieved through many things, but one of the key drivers was always trying out new and different activities. We wanted to be more than a chess club (our club motto).

This also included honestly questioning every aspect of the club. Last year, our committee took the decision to appoint a diversity officer and we were fortunate to have in our ranks, Rubinder, a senior HR woman in a major corporation with special responsibility for gender and diversity.

The first thing was to brainstorm with Rubinder. The ideas that made it to the board included using our website and Twitter to promote the intentions of the club and show why increasing diversity was a positive step, as well as to make contact with the Casual Chess Café and start a dialogue with the most active pro-women's chess organisation in London.

We then became aware of the grants that the ECF were making available to clubs to promote women's participation in chess. The club decided to apply immediately and were able to secure a £500 grant, which supported a women's chess month in May.

Our programme included three lessons from WFM Maria Manelidou, with the last one followed by a women's only tournament with £250 up for grabs. Everything was in place and we put the PR machine into motion, but overall the results were disappointing, with only 8 women taking part in the tournament.

Clearly we have much to learn, but the positives are that we have since recruited two female members and with our junior hour starting in September, we have the opportunity to recruit some young female players. Another positive was the performance of Amaya MacDonald who carried off the first prize of a £125 and has the talent to go far. Moreover, the experience has not deterred us, but rather made us more determined. We hope in conjunction with two other major London Chess Clubs to run a Tri-Site Tourney exclusively for women to continue raising the interest level.

To find out more about Hammersmith Chess Club, do see hammerchess.co.uk.

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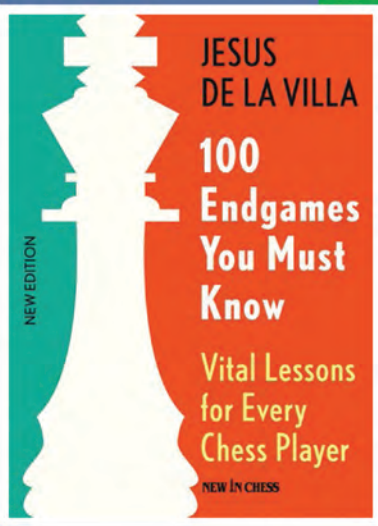
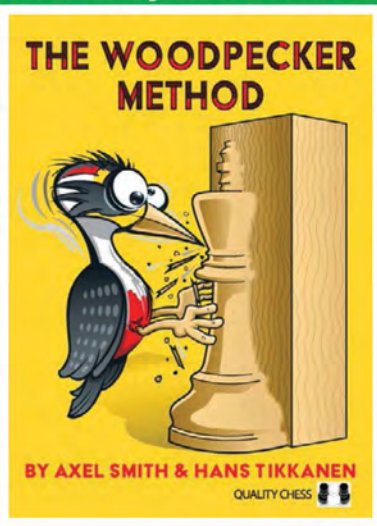
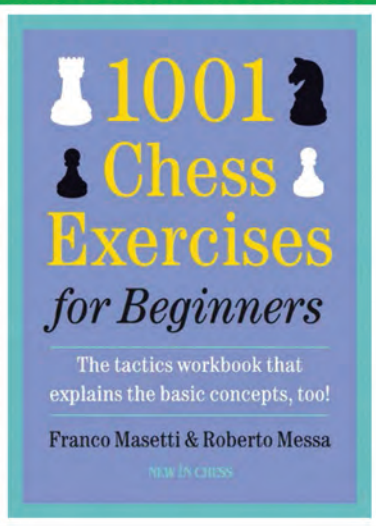
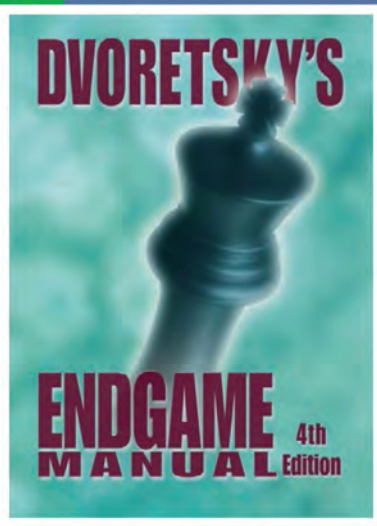








Growing Up a Wood

Ben Graff met up for a chat with Phil Wood, son of BH Wood, the founder of *CHESS Magazine*

Phil Wood opens his front door with a smile, welcoming me in off the windswept street. I am privileged to be Phil's team-mate at Kenilworth Chess Club. I have often wondered what it was like for Phil to grow up as the youngest son of our magazine's founder. Today is my opportunity to learn more.

Phil makes us both strong coffee and we eat cakes my daughter has baked, before settling down in his front room to talk. There are comfortable sofas, a bookcase full to bursting. An array of chess trophies, many of which were won by BH, in various corners of the room. On the table a chess board is set to the final position of Phil's recent game against Stratford, a match we had both taken part in earlier that week. I begin by asking Phil to share some of his childhood memories. I am intrigued as to how BH introduced him to the game.

He did teach me, Phil says, just as he had all his other children, before speculating that "Perhaps he was flagging a bit by the time I was old enough to learn." He was taught a lot by his siblings too, he tells me. An illustrious group: Peggy Clarke was joint British Ladies Champion in 1955 and Christopher and Frank were both student internationals. They have written much of interest on their famous father, which is why I was so keen to learn more from Phil as to his own personal reflections and memories.

An early introduction to postal chess was perhaps counterproductive, the lack of pace meant it was not necessarily the ideal game for a young child. His father's advice to focus on development and castling, whilst eminently sound, in some ways made Phil overly defensive as a player. "Looking back I realise I was too cautious; not aggressive enough. It is fair to say I never had quite the same interest as my siblings did. I don't know if I had less natural ability, but Frank had a strong rivalry with his older brother which motivated them both." I ask if he played his father much and he says with a grin that he did, but the trouble was BH would always win.

His father travelled a lot, says Phil, which was very unusual for those days. "The world was a much larger place once than it is now. I remember him coming back from a trip soon after the end of the second world war with a large bunch of bananas, which were impossible to get in this country back then. He hung them from the bannister and we would help ourselves. He could be obsessive in some ways. For a long time he would collect stamps from all his correspondence and I well remember him steaming them off their envelopes. He was a real internationalist. He always wanted to meet new people, to learn new languages, to reach out and explore. My father was very sociable in chess circles, but neighbours were mostly ignored; home was just a base to operate from. He was something of a workaholic with so many different chess projects continually on the go."

Phil Wood's childhood was filled with chess and he also used to help out a fair bit with CHESS Magazine*. He continues to play to this day, regularly turning out for Kenilworth Chess Club.*

We reflect on what BH's projects consisted off. He founded *CHESS* in 1935 and edited it until 1988. The circulation in the early days was around 7,000 and peaked at 11,000 around the time of Fischer-Spassky – volume figures that would be extraordinary for any publication on any subject in today's more fragmented digital society. In addition, BH was the chess correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Illustrated London News*, *The Birmingham Post* and *The Yorkshire Post*. His book, *Easy Guide to Chess*, published in 1942 has been popular ever since. Nigel Davies described it as "One of the best beginners'

books on the market." There were other books, a chess equipment business and roles as President of the International Correspondence Chess Association and England's representative when it joined FIDE.

BH was also a strong player, representing England at the 1939 Olympics in Buenos Aires. "The war broke out mid-tournament," Phil points out. "I remember he faced a challenge to get home, but as ever he found a way." There were also many tournament victories and in addition to winning the British Correspondence Championship in 1944-5, BH tied for second at the 1948 British Championship. "He should have won the event as I recall," says Phil. "He only needed a draw going into the final round, but he got too excited and could not focus."

I remark that numerous chess magazines fold very quickly and wonder what it was BH brought to this one that made it such an enduring success. "So many people try and make a living from chess and it is far from easy," Phil highlights. "I think my father's huge energy and drive, his sheer enthusiasm and the way he kept hustling and putting himself out there were what saw him through."

"Not only him of course. The fact was he managed to support a family of four children entirely through chess, which is quite some going. He always wanted to share his passion for the game with others and he was proud of the fact that *Chess*, Sutton Coldfield was sufficient address for any letter to find its way to him. I noticed he always cared as much about weaker players as he did the stronger ones. He was involved in a lot of club chess in Sutton Coldfield and would spend as much time organising the lower teams as he would the more senior ones."

Phil shared with me his memories of the place where the family grew up. "At the back of our house were two living rooms. One a comfortable sitting room with a radio and armchairs. My parents did not buy a television until we had all made it to university." The other was BH's study which overflowed with chess books and other publications. The family telephone, which they were not allowed to use as it was too expensive, took pride of place. It was a household dominated by games. The family played a lot of cards as well as chess: Bridge, Whist, Canasta, Bezique and Pounce. They were all keen on cricket. There was always something going on.

Phil reminisces on childhood holidays with all four siblings crammed into the back of the car, along with tennis rackets, cricket bats and all the other paraphernalia that goes with freedom. By the way, Phil says, BH was a terrible driver. "I think he crashed at least six cars before he was done, including a Morris Oxford, a Ford Zephyr 6, a Mark 10 Jaguar and an Austin Cambridge. I can well remember him walking through the door somewhat sheepishly after these prangs and us all heading out to inspect the damage."

"We would go on holiday to the chess congresses at Bognor Regis and Hastings, as well as my father's annual chess festivals. I will always remember one drive to Hastings, with the snow falling heavily on the South Downs. It was quite scary, but somehow we made it, just as we always did. My mother would run the congress bookshop. People would often ask her for recommendations. The thing was, she barely played at all, but was always able to advise based on the ideas of others." I ask Phil if his mother had known quite what she was getting into when she married BH. I don't think so, he says, but it was an extraordinarily happy life. "Fair to say though, she did try and lead us into careers other than chess."

BH Wood might safely be described as a workaholic, if not a chessaholic. Did you realise that on top of CHESS*, he wrote columns in several newspapers and was involved in chess politics? Here he is (pictured right) in action against Olaf Barda in the 1949/50 Hastings Premier, watched by fellow competitor Imre König who lived in England from 1938-1953.*

As a child, Phil remembered two court cases his father was involved in, which were finally successfully resolved after considerable worry. "Both were a product of the way my father's use of words could occasionally get him both into and back out of trouble," says Phil. The first involved a dispute with Jaques who took issue with BH describing his chess sets as "Genuine" Staunton.

Expert testimony, including from Alekhine, was utilised to eventually see this off. Then there was the dispute with Ritson Morry, a stalwart of British chess and a former solicitor who had been struck off and briefly jailed for embezzlement. BH described him in correspondence as "A notorious jailbird", and Ritson on learning of this sued, winning a pyrrhic victory of a farthing in damages and no costs. It was a big relief when the case was over. Phil recalls that eventually to some extent BH and Ritson were "sort of" reconciled. "My father once subsequently asked me to give Morry a lift to Eastbourne, which I did."

Phil remembered the first premises of *CHESS Magazine* and his own contribution to what was very much a family business. "It was originally based in the Masonic buildings in Sutton Coldfield. The place was wholly unsuitable. The lino on the stairs was seriously over polished and people kept slipping on it. We were all involved. We were paid to work on a bit of a production line. One of us would put the magazines in the envelope, another would tuck the flap in, and someone else would frank them. Previously there was a period when the magazine was printed in Liverpool, then Kettering. Finally my father decided to print it himself. He bought vastly expensive printing equipment. It cost around £2,000, which was the price of a house in those days. It was called 'hot metal' technology. I remember it being very noisy and smelly. The equipment usually worked well, but always had to be watched. I think his willingness to commit, to take a risk such as investing like this, was another facet of what made him successful. I don't doubt his bank manager was in a constant state of stress, having to assess the risk of BH's enterprises."

Finally it was time for the magazine to move from its original premises and BH relocated to the old Station Master's House in Sutton Coldfield. There was no security of tenancy and everything was originally located on a single floor. The place had high ceilings, with the typesetter in one room; other rooms contained the caster, a press room, a finishing room and a packing room where the pages of

the magazine were stitched together, a job Phil was often involved in. "I always enjoyed the manual work," Phil tells me.

"I also used to guillotine the paper from large reams and one of my jobs was to periodically take the massive blade into Birmingham to get it sharpened. I had to be so careful. It was quite capable of slicing through fingers, but fortunately I always managed without mishap." Phil tells me about his role when BH decided that an extension was needed to the premises as the magazine continued to grow.

"I was about 19 at the time and I worked with two youths my father had hired from the labour exchange to clear the top soil and vegetation from the garden. We hired a winch to pull down a tree. There was a lead lined railway water tank that I seem to recall the extension was built over. The architect made lavish plans to a high specification that BH could not afford, so he got a builder to do it with no plans for less than half the price."

Famous chess players regularly stayed with the Wood family and Phil has memories of having breakfast with Botvinnik and Keres. He recalls a certain amount of shock on the part of Botvinnik as to the English extravagance of having both butter and jam on your bread. "Soviet players were also always keen to get their hands on western white goods that simply could not be obtained back home," Phil remembered with a chuckle. "I also knew J.H. Donner well," Phil tells me. "He spoke excellent English, but always wanted to practise. He would come up to me and say "How now, brown cow!".

In some ways, Phil says, perhaps the contact with certain characters on the chess circuit slightly tempered his own enthusiasm for the game. He well remembers watching the former British Champion William Winter in action and seeing him hunched over the board, visibly shaking. A cigarette in hand and a yellow nicotine stain he had inadvertently left on the side of his head very prominent.

"Chess takes all sorts," Phil tells me. "One of my father's strengths was that he could build good relationships with nearly everyone. My father's life put him ringside at many of chess's biggest moments during the second half of the twentieth century. For example, I well remember him being in Iceland for Fischer-Spassky. He had a real window on the chess world and was able to share what he witnessed with so many."

"My father was very proud of all his writing," Phil adds. "I particularly remember how pleased he was when a reader of *The Illustrated London News* told him that he used to cut my father's chess article out and throw the rest of the magazine away. BH did share this comment with the editor, who apparently was not overly amused.

"It is also worth mentioning my father's humour. I remember him writing once that some Russian player whose name ended in 'ovich' would be participating in a tournament, but Vukovic was a no show. Readers were either baffled or got the joke. My father was certainly not afraid to test the boundaries.

"I did just also want to also mention his chess festivals. In some ways he created the template for events like these. One of my abiding memories is of a blindfold display a Yugoslav GM conducted with 8 games simultaneously. He stopped part way through for a cup of tea and then continued. I remember Tony Miles doing a much larger blindfold simultaneous years later and me thinking back to that day and sharing my memories from all those years ago, with the class I taught back then."

The wind is still blowing outside and it has started to rain. More time has passed than I thought while I have listened intently to Phil's stories. I feel I have learnt a great deal not only about BH himself, but the history of the magazine and what it was like for Phil to grow up as his youngest son. BH must have felt very fulfilled when he looked back on his life, I say to Phil. "Absolutely", Phil says. "He got to do the things he most wanted to do and brought a lot of people pleasure in the process. There can be no better legacy."

Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

What do the Dam Busters and the Red Arrows have in common? Well for one thing, they both have a very close association with RAF Scampton. The former, as 617 Squadron, prepared their incredibly daring and momentous raid (Operation Chastise) on the Möhne, Eder and Sorpe dams in May 1943, whereas the Red Arrows entertain vast crowds at festivals, anniversaries and royal occasions with their incredible aerobatic skills.

I felt privileged to participate in the UK Armed Forced Chess Association Chess Championships at Scampton this year and one of the highlights for me, apart from playing chess, was the tour of the heritage centre where Guy Gibson and his team were stationed during those dark days of World War II. I was also thrilled to sit in the cockpit of an actual Hawk tMA Mk1 – better known as a Red Arrow.

As for the heroes and ghosts of the past, I think of people like Sergeant John Hannah who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at the tender age of 18 after a successful attack on German barges, on 15th September 1940 over Antwerp. The Handley Page Hampden bomber, in which he was the wireless operator/air gunner, was subjected to intense anti-aircraft fire, starting a fire which spread quickly. The rear gunner and navigator had to bail out and Sergeant Hannah could have acted likewise, but instead he remained to fight the fire, first with two extinguishers and then with his bare hands. He sustained terrible injuries, but succeeded in putting out the fire and the pilot was able to bring the almost wrecked aircraft back safely. Hannah was the youngest recipient of the medal for aerial operations and the youngest for the Second World War. He had already flown on many operations. Truly a hero in my book and there were so many like him.

Hannah contracted tuberculosis a year later in mid-late 1941, brought on no doubt by his weakened condition following the severe burns he sustained during his Victoria Cross action. He had to leave the RAF in 1942 and sadly died on 7th June 1947 at Markfield Sanatorium in Leicester, where he had been lying for four months. Hannah's headstone is inscribed: "Courageous Duty Done in Love, He Serves His Pilot Now Above." His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Royal Air Force Museum in Hendon, London. One heck of a life and such a short one. It is so sad, I could weep.

That really put the chess in perspective, but it was the reason for our presence and we had to knuckle down and play. I had only a reasonable tournament scoring 4½ points. There were seven rounds and I won the first two and the last two, but faltered in between, drawing one from three. No cigars then. I have chosen a game that I won for the reason that I believe it to be the most interesting. Moreover, I have several points to make that

the reader might enjoy either learning from or congratulating themselves that they don't play like I do.

My adversary was a Staff Sergeant in the Gurkha regiment, Dinesh Thapa Magar with a grade of 83. My grade was 169. Dinesh currently serves in the QOGLR (Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment), having joined the British Army in 2000. Dinesh is from Dharan in eastern Nepal and he used to play in school tournaments as a boy. He loves to play and support Armed Forces Chess.

In the olden, golden days, it would almost certainly be a wipe-out in my favour, but these days grades can count for very little in terms of current strength, getting caught in opening lines learned by heart off the internet, etc. Also in my experience playing any Gurkha in these competitions has revealed that they don't like draws and they always play to win – no matter who they play or what the difference in strength is. It is a mindset, a mentality instilled into a fighting unit that can be relied upon to be skilful, professional and loyal to their cause.

I know Dinesh from previous competitions and I had seen him play many games against much stronger players and hold his own. However, I wanted to adopt the same fighting spirit from the start, so I played something that I rarely play. I hope you enjoy playing through the game as much as I did – and not just because of the result.

Dinesh Thapa Magar pictured at this year's UK Armed Forces Championship. Dinesh might only be graded 83, but he certainly gave Carl a real run for his money and could have drawn.

C.Portman-Dinesh Thapa Magar

UKAFCA Championship, Scampton 2019

c3 Sicilian

1 e4

This was actually rather arbitrary. I could just as easily have reached for the d-pawn, but I certainly wanted to bounce back from a shocking defeat in the previous round. It is easy to carry the baggage of such a loss into the next game, but one has to aim to extinguish any negative thoughts, start afresh and look forward to the next game.

1...c5 2 d4

In for a penny, in for a pound. I was still mad at the last game (guilty as charged), and wanted an open fight.

2...cxd4 3 c3 e5

He does not grab the tasty morsel that is the c-pawn. That's a shame, as I was going to give that up and the b-pawn as well.

4 ♘f3 ♘c6

Magar does not want to take the bait on c3.

5 ♗c4

Just get the pieces out, castle and play chess.

5...h6?!

This is one of those odd moves. I understand the point, of course. It covers the g5-square from any pins or the knight going there, attacking f7. Admittedly it does waste a developing tempo, but then again 5...♘f6 6 ♘g5 d5 7 exd5 b5 8 ♗xb5 ♕xd5 is a bit too crazy for us mortals.

6 0-0 ♘f6 7 cxd4 d6!

I think this is a clever little move from someone of Dinesh's grade. He won't mind an exchange of queens. Instead, 7...♘xe4 8 dxe5 ♘c5 9 ♗e3 looks very nice for White.

8 ♖e1

8 ♕b3 ♕e7 9 d5 ♘b8 10 ♘c3 ♗g4 11 ♗e3 is another line.

8...♗e7

I had also been busy considering 8...♘xe4 9 ♖xe4 d5 10 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 11 ♘c3.

9 h3

My turn to play the h-pawn one square.

9...0-0 10 ♘c3

The dust is settling, and the game is certainly open enough.

10...a6 11 a3 b5 12 ♗a2 ♗b7

I had to think here and I was not at all sure what I wanted to play.

13 ♘d5

13 dxe5 dxe5 seems even enough.

13...♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗f6 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 ♗d2 ♖b8

Dinesh is playing the game really well.

17 ♗c3 ♖e8 18 ♕b3 ♕c7 19 ♖ac1 ♕e7?

Allowing White to win a pawn.

20 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 21 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 23 ♖xc6

All I have to show for my attempt at sharpness and confusion in the opening is one pawn. Yet it was one pawn more than my opponent had and I needed to love and cherish the little thing. This e-pawn could after all become the wolf at the head of the pack, one day.

23...♖e6 24 ♖xe6

I was happy to swap off and take my chances in the endgame.

24...♕xe6

An interesting choice, offering to exchange queens and defend an inferior endgame. Presumably Dinesh thought he could do enough to hold the game.

25 ♕xe6 fxe6

This must be winning for White. One extra pawn and only two pawn islands against three. I recall thinking about our grading difference and that whilst Dinesh might have studied openings, how much time had he put into rook and pawn endgame study? Then it dawned on me that I wasn't so good myself. In this type of position those pesky master players have a plan, whereas people like me usually just play moves. There's a world of difference.

26 ♖c1 ♖b6 27 ♖c7

A rook on the seventh can't be bad.

27...b4!

An excellent move. Dinesh keeps on asking me questions. How inconsiderate of him.

28 axb4?!

Likely best was 28 a4 b3 29 f3 ♖b4 30 ♖a7 ♖xa4 31 ♖b7, etc, although there are many ways to go.

28...♖xb4 29 ♖a7

This is a big moment: which pawn should Black take?

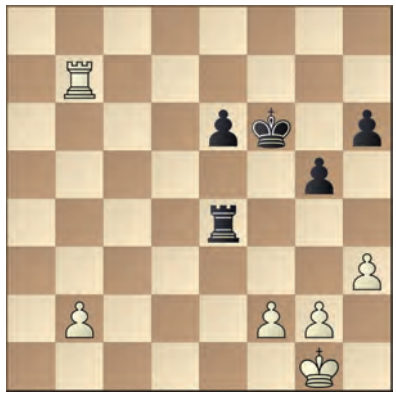
29...♖xe4

Fair enough. Personally I would have terminated the b-pawn as it would worry me out there in the desert all alone, but there's not so much in it.

30 ♖xa6 ♔f7 31 ♖a7+

Maybe 31 ♖a1 to get the rook behind the pawn: for example, 31...♔f6 32 ♖b1 ♖b4 33 b3 ♔e5 34 ♔f1 ♔d4 35 ♔e2 ♔c3 36 ♔e3 ♔c2 37 ♖a1 ♖xb3+ 38 ♔e2.

31...♔f6 32 ♖b7 g5



Any strong player would look at this and declare that it is drawn. I even knew this when I was playing, but one has to continue. At amateur level it is mistakes that often lose a game, not brilliant combinations, and we both wanted to play on to see if anyone would crack. He's a Gurkha remember – Dinesh never gives up.

33 g4?!

33 b4 was better because it keeps Black worrying about a pawn only four squares from promoting.

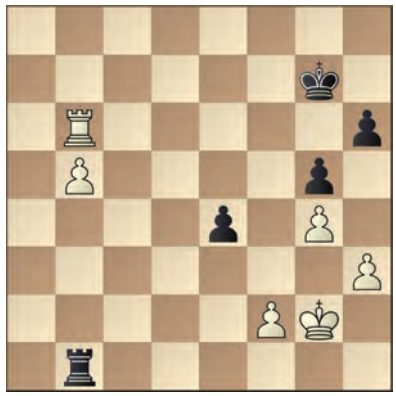
33...♖e1+ 34 ♔g2 e5 35 ♖b6+

An important intermezzo – just to push the king back a rank.

35...♔g7 36 b4 ♖b1

Of course, my rook should be behind my passed pawn, not in front of it. That might be the difference between victory and a draw.

37 b5 e4



I had a really big think here.

38 ♖e6 ♖xb5 39 ♖xe4 ♖b7 40 ♔g3 ♔g6 41 ♖e3 ♖f7 42 ♖b3 ♖f6 43 f3

This is a technically drawn position and we are posturing. However I am yet to mention our 17th chess unit, the clock. It is a crucial factor and something that one does not take into account when playing through someone else's game. By now time was very much ticking on.

43...♖c6 44 h4 ♖d6 45 ♖c3 ♖e6 46 f4 gxf4+ 47 ♔xf4 ♖f6+ 48 ♔g3 ♖d6 49 h5+ ♔g7 50 ♖c4 ♖d3+ 51 ♔f4 ♖d7 52 ♖e4 ♖f7+ 53 ♔g3 ♖c7 54 ♖e6 ♖c4 55 ♖g6+ ♔h7 56 ♖d6 ♔g7 57 ♔f3 ♖a4 58 ♖e6 ♖b4 59 ♖g6+ ♔h7 60 ♖e6 ♔g7 61 ♔g3 ♖a4 62 ♖e7+ ♔h8 63 ♔f3 ♖b4 64 ♖e4

An attempt to get him to swap the rooks off, when White would win.

64...♖xe4??

This loses immediately. In fairness, Dinesh was in time trouble. For him it was a shame, because he had played so well up to this point. He must have felt gutted when he lost, but he can be very proud of his standard and if he keeps on playing then grades with three figures are not very far away at all.

65 ♔xe4 ♔g7 66 ♔e5 ♔f7 67 ♔f5 ♔g7 68 ♔e6 ♔h7 69 ♔f7 ♔h8 1-0

Wow, that was some struggle and well played to Dinesh. It just shows that grades these days do not reflect strength (or lack of it), as they used to for some reason. Did this man really play like an 83-graded player? I think not.

If I could leave the reader with one final thought it would be this. Don't underestimate an opponent much lower graded than yourself and do not be intimidated when playing opponents much stronger than you.

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Studies with Stephenson

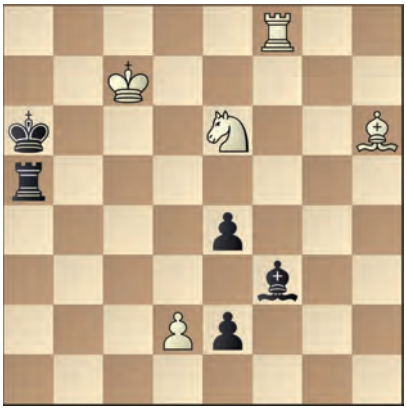
Timothy Whitworth, one of Great Britain's few endgame study composers, died a couple of months ago. He was far from a prolific composer, preferring to spend his time on publishing superbly-researched collections of the work of the famous composers of the past. In these, he presented the works of Leonid Kubbel, Hermann Mattison (both of which went to a second edition), and the Platov brothers.

In researching the original publication details of the studies in these books, Timothy spent hours in libraries. I suspect that his research was second to none in an area where sources are routinely copied, often with mistakes, and not checked. In addition to these collections, Timothy had a hand in two further books. Firstly, he edited a selection of the studies of composer Mike Bent. Secondly, and probably what he is best-known for, he co-authored *Endgame Magic* with John Beasley. A second edition of this introduction to the chess endgame study recently appeared.

I first met Timothy back in the 1970s at John Roycroft's Chess Endgame Study Circle meetings in London and met him regularly at other meetings of chess composition enthusiasts. I once bumped into him at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, where he was researching one of his books in the Bibliotheca Van der Linde-Niemeijeriana housed there. He spoke with a quiet authority and was invariably kind and generous, always ready to help. Before retirement he was a teacher, and from my experience of him, I think he must have been a fine one, something with which *The Guardian*'s fine obituary appeared to agree.

As I say, Timothy composed only a few studies, but this one, composed jointly with Jonathan Speelman, is well-worth a look. The final position is memorable.

J.Speelman & T.Whitworth
EG, 1982



White to play and win

1 ♔c6

This threatens mate, but walks into a check. White can stop the check with 1 ♗e3?, but Black's passed pawn then promotes and Black wins with 1...e1♕ 2 ♔c6 ♕c1+ 3 ♗c5 e3+ 4 ♖xf3 ♖a1 5 ♖xe3 ♕xd2.

After 1 ♖b8? e1♕ White has to settle for perpetual check with 2 ♖b6+ ♔a7 3 ♖b7+ (and not 3 ♗e3? ♕g3+) 3...♔a6, while 1 ♖a8+? drives Black's king into a better position, after which he can draw: for instance, 1...♔b5 2 ♖b8+ ♔c4 3 ♖b1 ♖a6 4 ♖c1+ ♔b3 5 ♘d4+ (5 ♔d7? ♗g4 wins) 5...♔b2 6 ♖e1 ♖xh6 7 ♘xe2 ♔c2 8 ♘g3 ♖h4 9 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 10 d4 ♗d5.

1...e3+

Black must give up his bishop as otherwise he is mated quickly: 1...♔a7 2 ♗e3+ ♖c5+ 3 ♗xc5+ ♔a6 4 ♖a8#.

2 ♖xf3 ♖e5

2...e1♕ allows White to exchange off into a won position with 3 ♘c7+ ♔a7 4 ♗xe3+ ♕xe3 5 ♖xe3, while 2...♖a1 gives White this mating attack: 3 ♘c5+ ♔a7 4 ♖f7+ ♔a8 5 ♘a4 ♖c1+ (if 5...♖xa4? 6 ♖f8+ ♔a7 7 ♗xe3+ ♖d4 8 ♗xd4+ ♔a6 9 ♖a8#) 6 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 7 ♔a6 ♔b8 8 ♗f4+ ♔c8 9 ♘c5 ♔d8 10 ♗d6 ♖a1+ 11 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 12 ♔c6 ♖f1 13 ♘e6+ ♔c8 14 ♖c7+ ♔b8 15 ♖b7+ ♔c8 (or 15...♔a8 16 ♘c7#) 16 ♖b8#.

3 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 4 ♘c5+ ♔a5

After 4...♔a7 White can win the new black queen with 5 ♗xe3 e1♕ 6 ♘d3+.

5 dxe3 e1♕

5...e1♘ 6 e4 ♘f3 7 ♗d2+ ♘xd2 8 e5 also wins.

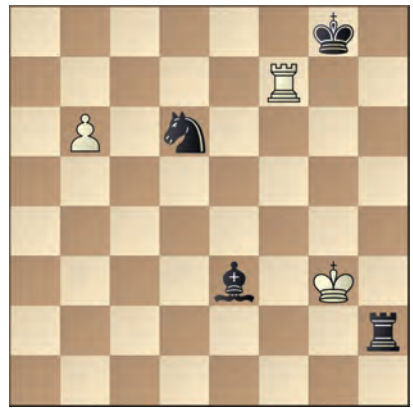
6 e4!

Timothy Whitworth (1932 - 2019), a fine composer and authority on endgame studies.

And wins. On an open board the black king and queen are both under threat and Black has to give one of them up.

For you to solve, here is a study by one of Timothy's favourite composers, taken from one of his books

H.Mattison
Deutsches Wochenschach, 1918

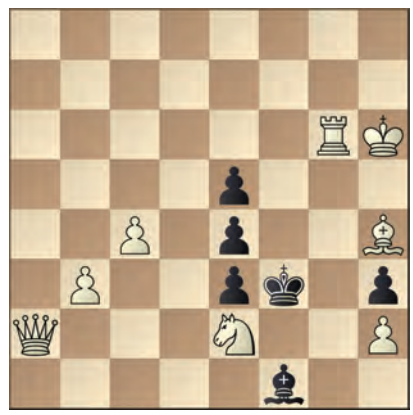


White to play and draw

To enter email matt@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge Ltd., 44 Baker Street, London, W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than 1st October. £30 of products from Chess & Bridge are available for the first correct entry drawn.

The winner of the March competition was Jim Crick of Inverness. The solution:

Joe Bunting
Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1920



White to play and mate in 3

1 ♖g1 ♗xe2

Or if 1...♗g2 2 ♕b1 and then 2...♔xe2 3 ♕d1#, 2...♔g4 3 ♕xe4#, 2...♗f1 3 ♕xf1# and 2...♗h1 3 ♕f1#.

2 ♔g5 ♗xc4

Other finishes are 2...♗d1 3 ♖f1# (3 ♖g3#), 2...♗f1 3 ♖xf1# (3 ♖g3#), and 2...♗d3 3 ♖g3#.

3 ♖g3#

Matthew Lunn has some handy and practical advice

Sometimes, I wonder if we chessplayers give our brains enough credit. We take for granted the skills required to play a competent, autonomous game of chess, but objectively it is a remarkable thing. The amount of moves one filters during calculation, to ensure that efforts aren't blighted by positional howlers and unforced blunders, is downright magical to the layman. Yet we are all capable of quite staggering errors of judgement, in part due to an over-reliance on pattern recognition. I have been reminded of this rather a lot recently, and have four examples from my travels that I'd like to share with you.

P.Bernardi-M.Lunn
Paris 2019

24...♕h5

I reached this position following an offbeat 7...♘a6 King's Indian, where my opponent miscalculated a variation and allowed me to plant a strong pawn on f3.

25 ♕d2

Now I spot a tactic, effectively forking two major pieces.

25...f2 0-1

White resigned, as I am threatening both to take on e1 and 26...♘f3+, winning the queen. The aesthetics of the discovered queen attack made the calculation easy.

However, I missed 25...♘f1+, winning the queen immediately. The oversight was pointed out to me shortly after the game, and I was completely baffled. Discovered checks are the first thing one assesses, and rather than look at both available options, I set about preparing a third. For whatever reason, my brain had filtered out the possibility of putting a knight on the back rank, which, coupled with the appeal of ...♘f3+ (and perhaps on an unconscious level, blocking the white queen's cover of h2), led me to my move.

In winning positions, you can often get away with dodgy pattern recognition. If things are more level, this is rarely the case.

M.Lunn-L.Unuk
Reykjavik 2018
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2 d6 5 ♗g5 ♘bd7 6 e3 b6 7 **♗d3 ♗b7 8 f3 c5 9 ♘ge2 h6 10 ♗h4 cxd4 11 exd4 d5 12 cxd5 ♗xd5 13 0-0 ♗e7**

It's the first round of the 2018 Reykjavik Open and I have a difficult pairing against WIM (now WGM) Laura Unuk, rated just shy of 2350. Following a sensibly played opening, I find myself in a pleasant position and must decide on my strategy.

14 ♖ae1

With an attack in mind – an admirable decision, but the rook is better placed on c1.

Instead, 14 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 15 ♕a4+ ♔f8 16 ♘f4, with ♗e4 to follow, gives White a minor but very safe advantage, while 14 ♗e4 was the move the coward in me had wanted to play, as I felt it would lead to a level position where Black had few winning chances. Indeed, 14...0-0 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♘c3 makes a draw by far the most likely result, but it's an insipid option with the white pieces.

My biggest regret in this game (with the exception of the embarrassing blunder that will shortly follow) is that I did not consider 14 ♗a6!, which looks bizarre but naturally emerges from the demands of the position, when observed with an unbiased eye. By restricting the a8-rook and light-squared bishop, White now has greater manoeuvrability and good chances of generating an advantage.

14...0-0 15 f4

A natural continuation, but now that the dark squares are weakened the d4-pawn becomes a target.

15...♖c8 16 ♘g3

16 f5 e5 17 ♗a6 (easier to spot now the rook is on c8) 17...♖c7 18 dxe5 ♘xe5 is pretty level, though the game still has some life in it.

16...♗c4 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4

Here I realised that I was just worse – it's a bad IQP and I can't play f4-f5, the only move to justify my dismal piece placement. After 18 f5 ♖xd4 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 fxe6 fxe6 my dark-squared and second-rank weaknesses will give Black a clear advantage even if I round up the e-pawn.

18 ♕d1

Defending the d-pawn and moving my queen to a more effective light-squared diagonal. It carries a fatal flaw though.

18...♖xd4

This just wins a pawn, due to 19 ♕xd4? ♗c5. I suspect I overlooked this simple move for two reasons. Firstly, the realisation that the position had turned caused a loss in concentration. Secondly, and most pertinently, lateral rook moves generally don't occur in the middlegame, the first two ranks aside. Had the rook been on d6, I am hopeful I would have seen this one coming.

At the recent Pula Open, my pattern recognition failed me in consecutive rounds, beginning with a tournament-defining loss to a tricky 1800.

M.Lunn-A.Zarovs
Pula 2019
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♕c2

I knew my opponent was likely to play the Nimzo-Indian, but had no idea how he'd meet 4 ♕c2. Therefore I concentrated my prep on 4...0-0, against which I have a decidedly dodgy repertoire.

4...c5

Before the game, I had skimmed Jan Gustafsson's excellent Chess24 series on the 4 ♕c2 line, and had a rough idea how to continue in this line. However, my selective memory of the critical variations proved to be calamitous.

5 dxc5 ♘a6 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♕xc3 ♘xc5 8 f3

Gustafsson had said that he couldn't see a clear route to a white advantage after 8 b4 ♘a4 (8...♘ce4 9 ♕d4 is the main line) 9 ♕c2 (9 ♕b3 is well met by 9...♘e4!, threatening ...♕f6) 9...b5! 10 cxb5 ♘b6, and thought that the text was preferable.

8...b6

A sensible, but innocuous move. I falsely remembered Gustafsson saying that 8...0-0 is well met by 9 ♗g5, and therefore I concluded that ♗g5 was a strong idea. In fact it was after 8...d5 9 cxd5 b6 that Gustafsson recommended 10 ♗g5, on the basis that White can achieve a very pleasant pawn structure: for instance, after 10...exd5 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 ♕xf6 gxf6 13 e3, where Black's lead in development doesn't compensate.

9 ♗g5?

A surprisingly bad move.

My poor prep also compelled me to reject the natural 9 b4 ♘a4 10 ♕b3 (as Black can no longer play ...♘e4) 10...b5 11 cxb5 ♘b6 due to Gustafsson's reservations about White's chances in the comparable 8...♘a4 line. However, I failed to appreciate that in this variation, White has also managed to play f3 (in the other line Black plays ...b5 in one go, rather than two), and my queen is better placed. Now I can play 12 e4 with a decent chance of an advantage – notably 12...d5 13 e5 ♘fd7 14 f4 leaves Black struggling for coordination.

9...h6 10 ♗h4 ♗b7

Now White must come up with a plan.

11 e4??

In some respects, this is the obvious move – White hasn't done anything particularly wrong and therefore seizing space in the centre should be possible. The narrative 'Black has better development, White has more space' makes intuitive sense. In spite of this, 11 e4 is the worst plausible move on the board, as it fails to take into account a straightforward tactic.

11...♘fxe4!

Already White can resign with a clear conscience.

12 ♗xd8 ♘xc3

Not only am I a pawn down, but I have to be careful of ...♘b3, trapping my rook. I was in shock – when you play 1 d4, it's rare to be dead lost after 11 moves.

13 ♗c7

One of many unpalatable options. 13 ♗xb6 axb6 14 bxc3 wins back the pawn, but Black's advantage is absolute and, besides, the a-pawn will drop in a few moves.

13...♘b3 14 ♗e5 f6 15 ♗xc3 ♘xa1 16 ♗d3 ♘b3 17 ♘e2 ♖c8 18 0-0

A poor move, dropping a pawn. Instead, 18 ♗g6+ ♔e7 19 ♗c2 is the only 'plan' that justifies carrying on – I can put my pieces on sensible squares and hope that Black makes an oversight.

18...♗a6 19 ♗g6+ ♔e7 20 ♗b4+ d6 21 ♖d1 ♖hd8 22 ♘f4 ♗xc4 23 ♘h5 ♘c5 0-1

White has zero chance of counterplay, so I decided to call it a day.

In the latter game, I was comprehensively out prepped by a Slovakian junior, before reaching the following pleasant position:

E.Walterova-M.Lunn
Pula 2019

My opponent sacrificed a pawn in a sharp c3 Sicilian, but a couple of inaccuracies have allowed me to more or less consolidate. I saw that ♘xd5 is a tactical possibility, and spotted an opportunity to prevent this, whilst developing a piece.

22...♖he8?

Played without appreciating all of White's options. Instead, 22...♕b6+ with ...♖he8 to follow maintains Black's advantage.

23 ♖xe8

And I wondered if the game would soon be over. As it turns out, I was right. It occurred to me that my opponent might be heading to the lines after 23 ♘xd5? ♘xd5 24 ♖xe8 (or 24 ♕xd5 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 cxd5) 24...♖xe8 25 ♕xd5, where Black wins with 25...♖e1+.

23...♖xe8 24 ♕xf6+! ½-½

I had completely missed that the tactic could be achieved this way round. White will win her pawn back after 24...♔xf6 25 ♘xd5, and given she has the more comfortable ending, I accepted the accompanying draw offer.

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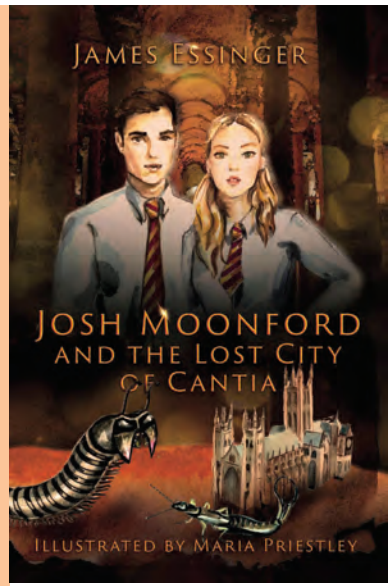
Playing chess below Canterbury Cathedral



James Essinger on life, his love of Canterbury and new novel

I'm not very good at chess, but I love writing about it. I adore writing about the city of Canterbury too. I've lived in Canterbury since 1986 and have been weirdly fascinated by the city ever since visiting it in 1964 with my parents and younger brother Rupert.

I was only six at the time. A photo, presumably taken by my father, shows my mother and Rupert (in the pushchair) outside Canterbury Cathedral. I don't know the exact day when this was taken except that it was sometime in the summer of that year, three years before the fabled 'summer of love'.

I next went to Canterbury in February 1977 for a few months during my gap year between school and Oxford University. I worked in the Morelli's café on the old Whitefriars Bridge (there's a Tesco Metro there now), earning about £22 a week, which paid my rent and kept me fed. I really loved living in Canterbury for those months; living in Canterbury has always somehow been a mystical experience for me; and in a sense what happened next in my life was merely a lacuna before returning to Canterbury.

James Essinger pictured on his first visit to Canterbury, standing above brother Rupert.

In September 1977 I went to university and after leaving taught English in Finland for three nine-month stints before returning to Britain in the summer of 1983. In January 1984 I started a sort of quasi-job in a small and rather seedy London PR consultancy, and then at some other, more established PR consultancies in London before, early in June 1986, coming with my now sadly late friend Roger Taylor for a day out in Canterbury.

This visit utterly rekindled my adoration of *Cant-ware-burgh* – the 'borough of the men of Kent' as the Anglo-Saxons used to call it. I decided to try to get a job in Canterbury, which I managed to do, matching my princely salary in London of £13,000, and moving to Canterbury on August 16th 1986, where I've lived ever since.

My books, whether novels or non-fiction, tend to be the product of thoughts and imaginings and impressions and ideas that have often percolated for many years before I do anything with them. I'm sure this is true of most, if not all, writers. Back in my university days I tried to write a novel which combined two of my great passions: Finland and Canterbury. It was called 'Effect on Reindeer', not a great title. While I don't think I ever finished it and I really don't recall what happened in it, I do remember there was a character in it called Dr Development who lived in a strange hi-tech world underneath Canterbury Cathedral.

More recently, I've used the idea of an underground world beneath Canterbury Cathedral in my novel *Josh Moonford and the Lost City of Cantia*, which was published on July 1st this year. It's a story for the Young Adult market, but should also interest adults.

The book's about a fifteen-year-old schoolboy, Josh Moonford (he becomes sixteen during the story), as well as his younger twin brother and sister, Dora and Sam, Josh's girlfriend Lindsay, a warm-hearted chav called Troy Wilson, and a long-haired, pretentious, eighteen-year-old, English-Literature-studying teenager called Declan Jacques. Declan is my favourite character in the book and may very likely be based on what I was like when I was a sixth-former, except that I didn't have long hair.

Essentially, what happens in the story is that the Moonfords, who come from an ostensibly rather impoverished family and who don't have a father any more (he went missing some years ago), discover apparently by accident an underground community beneath Canterbury Cathedral, which is called Cantia and which is actually an underground Roman world existing today, not in the past.

The idea is that Cantia is a living, modern, underground Roman community and was founded by the Romans of Canterbury when the Anglo-Saxons invaded in AD 550 and they all went underground and gradually built their own subterranean world complete with a city, an amphitheatre and even underground countryside.

Chess is an important part of the book. The Cantians have their own version of chess which is based loosely on ours, but is more complicated. For example, the Cantian chessboard is ten by ten rather than eight by eight, and they have additional pieces which Josh has to learn about.

At a crucial point in the story, Josh and his friends, who are stranded in Cantia, are trying to rescue Josh, Dora and Sam's mum and also a fellow called Carlo Clancy who is a famous movie star and has got stuck there himself – he is based closely on Orlando Bloom, the Canterbury movie star. Josh and his friends are desperately in need of money so they can buy some food and pay for their night's accommodation in a sort of pilgrims' hostel called *Domus Sancta*, which is the Latin for 'Holy House'. The only money they have is English cash and that's no use whatsoever because although Cantia is technically in England it's not, as they discover, politically part of the British Isles and Cantians have their own currency, which is, of course, based around Roman coins.

So what are they going to do? Either they don't pay their accommodation and will get arrested by some very sinister Cantian figures called policemonks, whose guard animals are giant earwigs, and starve into the bargain.

The only chance Josh and his friends have for avoiding this fate is for them to earn some money somehow; and the sole method that presents itself is for Josh to win money by playing Cantian chess. Josh is the only one of them who knows how to play normal, above-the-ground chess, but Josh doesn't know how to play Cantian chess any more than you or I do; so he just has try his best.

"As we crossed the square, we got closer and closer to the tall buildings on the far side. They weren't tall by the standards of the world above, but they had three, at sometimes even four storeys, which was pretty tall by Cantian standards. Outside one of the bigger buildings were stumpy black tables surrounded by smaller black stumps for seats, most with Cantians sitting on them in their brightly-coloured togas and dresses. As far as I could tell, each table had little ornaments on it, though I couldn't see from this distance what the ornaments were."

As Josh gets closer, he realised that the 'ornaments' on the tables are, in fact, chess pieces.

"I noticed at once that the chess-boards had more squares than in our chess. The boards in Cantian chess had ten squares on each side instead of eight. Also, most of the chess pieces looked weird and very different from our chess pieces.

In front of each player were little piles of brown coins.

We were too close to the Cantian players to speak English now. Declan grabbed me by the sleeve of my toga, gave me a meaningful look and nodded at the chess-players.

I thought of Mum and Carlo out there somewhere and needing to be rescued. I also thought of Troy saying how we couldn't be at our best if we were starving.

Could I win any money at chess? I knew I wasn't too great a player, but I hoped maybe the Cantians weren't that great at it either.

I watched two boys – European Cantians – playing. They were completely absorbed in their game and an older boy, an African Cantian, sat at a separate table keeping an eye on the game. He noticed me and gave me a friendly smile. They all wore SS armbands.

The third boy, the older one, was about my age. He had a cheerful expression and curly jet-black hair, and wore a brown toga like Sam's.

Leaving Declan and the others, I went over to the boy. *'Salve,'* I said. He said *'Salve'* back.

We swapped names. I told him my name was 'Josea', which is my name in Latin class at school. He said his was Marcus.

I sat in the empty chair opposite him. There was a chess-set between us, with some pieces I recognized and others I didn't.

'Marcus,' I said, in Latin of course. *'I'm from the countryside. I'm here with friends. We're trying to find a beautiful lady who has long, dark brown curly hair. She's from the countryside too. Have you seen anyone like her?'*

Marcus slowly shook his head, then said, rather sadly.

'I'm sorry, Josea, I have not.'

I thought of adding a description of Carlo too, but realised that too many questions about missing people might make Marcus suspicious, assuming he was a suspicious kind of person. So I asked him about Cantian chess instead.

'But surely everyone knows how to play chess?' Marcus replied, looking puzzled.

He called chess *ludus latruncularius*. I knew ludus meant 'game', but not what latruncularius meant.

'No, we don't play this kind of chess in the countryside,' I said.

Marcus seemed to accept this feeble and risky explanation, and began to explain the moves and the Latin names of the pieces to me.

Cantian chess turned out to be a strange mixture of the chess I knew and something completely different. There were ten pawns on the second row for each player. The king – which Marcus called the 'Proconsul' – moved like our king did, just one square in each direction, and there was also a piece in the shape of a tower, which moved like the rook did in our chess, that is, squareways along ranks and files. Another piece was called the *nuntius*, Latin for 'messenger'. The *nuntius* was the equivalent of our bishop: that is, it moved diagonally. There were also horses, or knights, as of course they're called and they moved like our knights did.

One piece, which was completely unknown and foreign to me, Marcus called the *stultus*. It was in the shape of a little man with a pointed nose and a toga. In our chess the rooks are in the corners, but in Cantian chess the *stultuses* were in the corner and the rooks next to them. The stultus's move was very weird: it went three squares along any rank or file, then one square diagonally forwards in either direction.

Cantian chess had a queen, but it wasn't like ours which can go as many squares as it wants along a rank, a file or a diagonal. The Cantian queen could only travel a maximum of four squares.

Once Marcus had explained how the pieces moved, it seemed the obvious thing to do to play a game together, so we did. He didn't seem bothered about us playing for money. Phew! Just as well.

That game was a total disaster for me.

I lost horribly quickly, mainly because of course I was still learning how the pieces moved, but mostly because I hadn't realised that the *stultus* was so important in Cantian chess. Also, because of the bigger board and the larger number of pieces, Cantian chess was even more difficult and more complicated than ours is.

We changed colours and played again. This time I did better. I felt a bit more relaxed now, and a whole lot more confident. I managed to win the next game, using my *stultus* to deliver a sneaky checkmate to Marcus's king. I expected Marcus to be annoyed I'd beaten him, but instead he smiled.

'Josea, you play well. You should play Senator Antonius now and bet against him. He is fat and rich and he does not play me because I always beat him. But he does not know how well you play.'

'But Marcus, I don't have any money.'

'Josea, I know that people from the countryside are poor, so if you play him I will give you a stake, and if you win you can give it back to me.'

I didn't know what to say except, *'Thank you'*.

Then Marcus said a very strange thing to me. *'When you play Antonius, you must use the Mouth of Wisdom.'*

I just stared at him. *'The what?'*

'The Mouth of Wisdom. You didn't use it when you played me, but you must use it if you want to defeat Antonius.'

The Mouth of Wisdom? Not only hadn't I used it, I didn't have the faintest idea what it was.

'What's the Mouth of Wisdom?' I asked, quickly adding, *'We don't have them in the countryside.'*

Marcus pointed to a neat little hole a few inches below the top of the stump.

'When the game starts, put your finger in there.'

'Which finger?'

He shrugged. *'It doesn't matter. Any one. But not yet. Wait until the game starts.'*

'All right, I will.'

Marcus smiled, then stood up and hurried over towards a big fat white man in a purple toga who was watching chess about six tables away. Marcus said something to the man, who stood up, looked over in my direction, and headed towards me. Three men and one lady – the men were white like Antonius and the lady was black and very beautiful – who'd been sitting close by Antonius got to their feet and followed him.

Oops. So much for not getting noticed by the Cantians.

I glanced at Lindsay, Declan, Troy and the twins, who were hanging back in the square, looking hungry and stressed.

Antonius turned out to have a serious ego problem, to put it mildly. His sidekicks hung onto every word he uttered. Like him, they all wore SS armbands. He talked loudly and arrogantly, as if he was one of the most interesting people who'd ever lived.

I worried Marcus might ask Antonius about Mum, but instead, he simply introduced me to the man as *'A brilliant chess-player from the countryside'*.

'Oh, I shall defeat him,' said Antonius, waving airily in my direction as if he thought I was about as important as a dead woodlouse. The beautiful black lady, who was wearing a bright red toga and had lots of curly hair all tied up high above her head, took out a brown leather money-bag from inside her dress and handed it to Antonius. He tossed it on to the table in front of us.

'I will wager all this that I can defeat this boy from the countryside,' said Antonius.

Marcus put three silver coins down on my side of the table.

'He wagers these,' Marcus said.

Antonius glanced at me. *'My stake is much greater. If you win, you take all the money. If you lose, I take your friend's stake and also you shall work in my house for seven days,*

without any wages, on unpleasant tasks.'

I wondered what *they* would be. But what choice did I have but to agree?

'All right,' I said. I felt totally nervous.

The game started. Antonius played blue, and I played red.

Now, I reached down and put my left forefinger inside the Mouth of Wisdom, or Wisdom Mouth, leaving my right hand free to move the pieces.

Antonius reached down and put his finger inside the Wisdom Mouth on his side. His finger was so fat, I was surprised it fitted.

When I put my finger in the hole, I didn't feel anything, so I kept pushing it in, until it hit a sleek, rounded metallic surface.

The moment I touched that surface, I felt like I was in a dream."

The idea is that when you play Cantian chess you can, if you use the Mouth of Wisdom, have a kind of virtual reality experience in which you, the player, becomes a commander of your Cantian chess army. It's a fully immersive experience, as Josh discovers...

"The landscape was like I'd read about in books about Ancient Romans: hot sun overhead, olive trees in the distance, red-roofed houses and a beautiful old temple in the distance on a hill. Between here and the hill stretched a great wide plain and... an army of maybe a thousand soldiers was spread out over it.

Each soldier in my army was red from head to toe, including his uniform and weapons. There were red men riding giant red woodlice, red men with red javelins, red infantrymen... and red war-earwigs the size of large dogs.

A second or so later I realised what all this was. I realised that this was my army in the game of chess I was playing with Antonius. I knew that I was playing red in the game and that these red pieces were mine. Except somehow, the wisdom hole was making me think I was commanding a real Roman army.

I could see the enemy army, the pieces in dark blue, on the far hillside. I looked back at my army. I knew it was time to attack. But how could I make them move forward? I had to do something, because I saw that all my soldiers of war-animals, including the giant red woodlice, and the red war-earwigs, were looking at me for guidance.

So I hurried quickly towards them. I shouted, *'Adorite!'* which I knew was Latin for 'Charge!' as loudly as I could. I remembered the word from a passage in a Latin textbook from school about the Romans fighting the people they called barbarians. Well, me saying that word did the trick, it really did. My red army – men on horseback and on the back of woodlice, all the men were armed with deadly iron-tipped lances, by the way – wheeled towards the dark blue army on the hill and they charged. The blue army seemed to be taken by surprise. It was as if they were still trying to decide what to do.

Maria Priestley

I stayed with my army, yelling words of encouragement, running alongside them and calling out to them to charge even faster, and I somehow managed to keep up with them, even though they seemed to be running faster even than the wind. Soon we were close to the hillside and I accompanied them as they raced even faster towards the dark blue army.

Somehow, suddenly, I remembered that someone had once told me that when two cars crash into each other head on, it was always the slowest car that came off worst. I didn't join my soldiers in the fight, not because I'm a coward, but because there was so much obliteration and smashing and destruction and death, and sharp weapons smashing into flesh that I knew that I'd be killed if I did that, or at least I would be killed if this dream became any kind of reality, so at the very last moment I slowed my pace, but I still kept screaming out to my soldiers to fight hard and to charge, and I dodged dark blue soldiers who were coming towards me. I don't know why they didn't stab me with their weapons. Perhaps it was really a dream and so they couldn't actually do that. But I knew that I was running round and shouting like a madman, roaring at my solders to smash down the enemy.

I suddenly realised that I was really 'feeling the game' as Marcus had put it and that my army was creating total murder and mayhem.

The battle seemed to go on for a long time. Both the armies were fighting completely mercilessly and I thought it perfectly possible my army would be defeated. But maybe the completely desperate situation we were in there in Cantia gave me extra energy for the game or maybe my finger was pushed further into the Wisdom Hole than Antonius's was, but anyway, my army slowly began to get the better of Antonius's.

Masses of dark blue soldiers had been crushed, beheaded and chopped into pieces in the first wave of my army's attack. My red soldiers and their war-animals now outnumbered the dark blue army and its own war animals. There they lay on the battlefield, hundreds of Antonius's dark blue soldiers, like blue snow-drifts on the hillside, crimson blood pouring out of their still-trembling bodies. There were hundreds of their own giant woodlice and giant earwigs that were dead as well. My own army's giant woodlice and giant earwigs were mostly unscathed, and were rearing up, with their soldiers on the backs of them, triumphant over their fallen enemy.

I looked with pride at my army and how well they had done. We had some casualties, some men and their animals were slaughtered, but far fewer than the blue army had.

I wandered amongst my victorious troops, shaking them by the hand and I even dared to stroke the deadly-looking rear pincers of my army's terrifying giant war-earwigs...

I don't remember taking my finger out of the Mouth of Wisdom, but I must have done. Antonius got to his feet. He stared down at the chess-board in total horror. All his blue pieces, except one, were off the board now, lying toppled on the ground. The only blue piece still on the board was the proconsul, the most important piece in Cantian chess.

Antonius pointed at Marcus with the fat right forefinger which Antonius had used in the Wisdom Mouth. *'I shall have my revenge on you, boy!'*

Marcus shrank back from his finger.

I stood up and looked at Antonius. *'Why swear revenge on him, when I was the one who beat you?'*

Antonius glanced at me. *'You are from the countryside and do not know how to behave, but this fool Marcus is from the town. He should respect me! I shall have my revenge!'*

Antonius strode off angrily, followed by his hangers-on. Antonius's money-bag still lay on the table.

Marcus didn't have to tell me these were my winnings; I knew. I was just so excited I'd won. I loosened the cord of the bag and looked inside. The bag was full of silver and bronze Cantian money. I was pretty sure we'd have enough to pay for our rooms at the holy house, and probably for breakfast too. I gave Marcus three silver coins to him across the table, then added an extra silver coin as a gift."

Josh Moonford and the Lost City of Cantia (RRP £9.99) was published on July 1st by The Conrad Press. It is available as a print book from Amazon and can be ordered from all bookshops. It is also available as an ebook.

The extracts from the novel have been slightly edited for use here. This article is in memory of Rupert David Essinger (May 2nd .1961 - January 21st 2019).

Overseas News

CHINA – Extremely strong tournaments come thick and fast these days, with scarcely a day going by when the chess enthusiast can't tune into live games from an event featuring at least one if not several players over 2700. One such tournament was the Hainan Danzhou (30 June - 7 July), which featured a large number of draws despite the presence of Richard Rapport. The Hungarian no.1 did, however, pick off tail-enders Ernesto Inarkiev and Bassem Amin to triumph with an undefeated 4½/7, finishing half a point ahead of Wei Yi and Yu Yangyi.

CZECH REPUBLIC – Pavel Matocha's chess train will roll again this October, leaving Prague on the 11th ahead of returning on the 15th. The journey will take in Karlovy Vary, Cesky Krumlov, Brno and Trencin, as well as 11 rounds of rapid chess. Those interested should see www.facebook.com/SachovyVlak.

HOLLAND – 18-year-old Lucas van Foreest defeated his elder brother Jorden in at blitz play-off at the end of the Dutch Championship in Amsterdam (1-7 July). In the final round the younger van Foreest's attack eventually crashed through against Erik van den Doel, which enabled him to share first place on 5/7, despite being the lowest-rated player in the field. Notably the opening of van Foreest-van den Doel was the Exchange Caro-Kann, the same opening in which Lucas van Foreest had destroyed Evgeny Bareev back at Wijk aan Zee, as presented by Daniel King in our April pages.

ISRAEL – Luke McShane reached 2/2 with a highly creative display against Pavel Eljanov in the Netanya Masters (23 June - 2 July). Losses in the final two rounds against Boris Gelfand and Peter Svidler meant that McShane finished on 4/9 in what was a pretty strong all-play-all. Gelfand would edge out Lenier Dominguez Perez on tie-break after the pair had finished on '+2'. We'll have much more on the Netanya International from Yochanan Afek next month.

SPAIN – Parham Maghsoodloo triumphed at the annual Magistral Ciudad de León (5-7 July). The World Junior Champion began by defeating local star Jaime Santos 2½-1½, while the other semi-final saw Vassily Ivanchuk overcome Indian wunderkind Nihal Sarin by the same score. 32 years separated the two finalists and it was the 18-year-old Indian no.1 who ran out a ready winner, triumphing 3-1.

SWEDEN – Luke McShane took on Nils Grandelius in a match held alongside the Swedish Championships in Eskilstuna (6-15 July). After a hard-fought draw in the opening game, McShane prevailed as Black in the second classical encounter before the players switched to rapid and blitz games, something which should have served as handy preparation for the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk next month.

USA – David Howell was a late replacement for Jan-Krzysztof Duda in the A tournament at the Summer Classic in Saint Louis (18-28 June), where Gawain Jones was top seed. Whilst Jones, possibly feeling the effects of a busy schedule throughout April and May, was far from his best, Howell was right up there throughout. Howell got off to the best possible start, outplaying Sam Shankland with his favourite Berlin Wall in the opening round and probably should have converted a pawn-up rook endgame against Jones in round 4.

Remarkably Gawain Jones drew his first seven games. No doubt frustrated, he then appeared to go all-in with no joy against Darius Swiercz, after which he lost his final two games too, including a lively final-round clash with Howell. The Seaford star was defeated by Jeffery Xiong in the penultimate round, but caught up the American teenager thanks to his final round victory which also saw him overtake Jones as the UK no.1. However, Howell couldn't quite catch the hero of the second half of the tournament, Le Quang Liem, as the Vietnamese GM powered away to clear first place.

Final Standings:

1.	Quang Liem Le	6/10
2.	David Howell	5½
2.	Jeffery Xiong	5½
4.	Sam Shankland	5
5.	Dariusz Swiercz	4½
6.	Gawain Jones	3½

Home News

BATTLE – The ECF were unsurprisingly delighted to announce that at the latest FIDE meeting in Baku three English players were awarded the IM title. Our congratulations to James Jackson of Banbury, Manningtree's Adam Taylor and Matthew Wadsworth who currently studies at the University of Cambridge.

BRIDGEND – The South Wales International attracted five grandmasters, including the Welsh-registered Nigel Davies, to its new home in Bridgend (7-12 July). When the dust had settled, two of those had tied for first along with IM Jose Camacho Collados, a lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Cardiff. Notably of the first five home only Camacho Collados lost a game, bouncing back most well from a shock opening round defeat at the hands of William Phillips of Hatch End Chess Club. Camacho ground down Keith Arkell no less in round 7 ahead of defeating Davies and drawing with Chatalbashev.

Leading scores: 1-3 Jose Camacho Collados (Cardiff), Boris Chatalbashev (Denmark), Oleg Korneev (Spain) 7/9, 4-5 Peter Roberson (St Albans), Grzegorz Nasuta (Poland) 6½, 6-11 Jack Rudd (Barnstaple), Nigel Davies (Southport), Jonathan Blackburn (Holmes Chapel), Alex Bullen, Grzegorz Toczek (both Cardiff), Jagadeesh Siddharth (Singapore) 6.

BRISTOL – Regular Bristol winner Keith Arkell was defeated by Conor Murphy at the Steve Boniface Memorial Congress (21-23 June), which was won by Alan Merry as the younger generation came very much to the fore.

Open: 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2-5 Jonah Willow (Nottingham), Thomas Villiers (Muswell Hill), Sacha Brozel (Hendon), Conor Murphy (Charlton) 4.
Major: 1 Ben Larkin (Stratford) 4½, 2-10 Gareth Cullen (South Bristol), Robert Radford (Horfield), Tim Woodward (Trowbridge), Stephen Williams (Cwmbran), Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), Stephen Horrell (Abergavenny), Jude Shearsby (Coventry), David McIntosh (Chepstow), Ryan Cheung (Southampton) 3½.
Minor: 1-5 Piotr Zielinski (Horfield), John Webb (Cosham), Nigel Morris (Coventry), John Harris (Forest of Dean), Paul Greenaway (Taunton) 4.

EDINBURGH – Stewart's Melville College in Edinburgh hosted the 128th Scottish Chess Championships (6-14 July). Danny Gormally, Colin McNab and Matthew Turner were doing battle in the main event as we went to press. The full results next time, but for now we can reveal that the Scottish Blitz was won by Ritvars Reimanis with a perfect 7/7, finishing a point ahead of Calum Macqueen (both Edinburgh). The Under-1850 event saw Michael Ash (Musselburgh), Chris Linskaill (Sandy Bells, Edinburgh) and Donald Heron (Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh) tie for both first place and the Scottish U1850 senior title on 4/5, while Alex Macdonald (Greenwood) won the Under-1500, finishing half a point ahead of Isaac Browning (Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh).

KENDAL – 12-year-old Yichen Han defeated his second grandmaster as he smoothly outplayed Nigel Davies at the South Lakes Congress in Kendal (7-9 June), despite having been defeated the round before by IM Joseph McPhillips.
Open: 1 Joseph McPhillips (Bolton) 4½/5, 2 Yichen Han (Forest Hall) 4, 3 Barry Hymer (Lancaster) 3½.
Major: 1 John Milnes (Bradford) 4, 2-7 Dave Siddall (Carlisle), Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Sam Davies (Huddersfield), Kevin Wilson (Darlington), Martin Seeber (Forest Hall), David Hall (Perth) 3½.
Intermediate: 1 Syd Cassidy (Carlisle) 4½, 2-3 Peter Lovatt (Malpas), Steve Clare (Wallasey) 4.
Minor: 1-8 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford), Andrew Duffell (Norwich), Paul Gelder (Alwoodley), Paul Jackson (Morecombe), Tim Bowler (Maryport), Michael Foss (Woking), Stanley Johnson (South Shields), Nicholas Wright (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 3½.

KETTERING – Yorkshire won the 100th County Championship, gaining revenge for losing the previous two finals on tie-break by destroying Surrey 11-5 in Kettering on July 13th. That fixture paid a fitting tribute to the Yorkshire-born, Surrey stalwart Steve Berry who sadly passed away back in January (see the February *CHESS*). The whole of the finals day was well run by County Championship controller Mark Murrell and his team, who provided live games from the top match, as well as a blog and up-to-date results of all the sections throughout.

Youth in action. The top boards at the Steve Boniface Memorial Congress in Bristol. On the left Alan Merry faces Jonah Willow, while right Connor Murphy will go on to defeat Keith Arkell.

Further evidence that the whole event may, however, sadly be in need of an overhaul was seen as Lincolnshire defeated Devon by a walkover in the Minor Counties Championship. The remaining finals were, however, closely contested, with Essex overcoming Lancashire 8½-7½ in the Under-180, the same score by which Middlesex narrowly got the better of Suffolk in the Under-160. Elsewhere Yorkshire largely outclassed Worcestershire to win 9½-6½ in the Under-140s, but Essex did the same to Yorkshire as they beat them 8-4 in the Under-120s, while Staffordshire edged out Nottingham 7-5 in the Under-100s.

KINGSTON UPON THAMES – Kingston Chess Club are now holding fairly regular rapidplay events – keep an eye on kingstonchessrapidplay.co.uk. At their latest event of 1st June, Gavin Wall (Richmond) and Russell Granat (Wimbledon) tied for first with 5/6 in the Open. Andriy Peykov (London) won the Major with that same score, while Suyash Srikanta Prasad (Maidenhead) went half a point better in the Minor.

It may not surprise you to learn that organiser extraordinaire Adam Raoof has a hand in the Kingston Rapidplay. In another of his recent events, the Muswell Hill Rapidplay of June 25th, Ben Keohane (London) triumphed with 5/6 in the Open, as did Oliver Finnegan (Loughton) in the Major and David Lewis (Hendon) in the Minor. The Hampstead Under-2200 Congress (15-16 June) was a little more competitive, Stephen Prior (Grantham), Chris Davison (Cambridge) and Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham) sharing first place in the top section with 4/5. However, Georgi Aleksiev (Bulgaria) racked up a perfect score in the Under-1900 and Lee Bullock (Hackney) also came outright first, albeit with half a point less in the Minor.

LLANDUDNO – Philip Hayward had the tournament of his life at the North Wales Congress as he bounced back from an opening round defeat to win four on the trot, including defeating Nigel Davies in the final round in Llandudno.
Open: 1-3 Philip Hayward (Oxford), Adam Ashton (Oldham), Thomas Carroll (Hoylake) 4.

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Major: 1-2 Graham Williamson (Stevenage), Paul Benson (Runcorn), 4, 3-7 Duncan Williams (Swansea), Robert Taylor (Ashfield), David Pinch (Steynton), Sam Davies (Southport), Paul Carlucci (London) 3½.
Minor: 1-2 Kate Walker (Shrewsbury), Ken Gorman (Poulton-le-Fylde) 4½, 3-7 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford), Timothy Allen (Battersea), Jeff Wilson (Oldham), Jonathan Jones (Steynton), Nick Holmes (Shrewsbury) 3½.

LONDON – A welcome new initiative was the SCCU/London Club Championships, which took place on June 29th in the same venue that the Golders Green Rapidplay uses, St Luke's Church Hall. This rapid event featured a top section for teams with a grade no higher than an average of 180. That was won by Muswell Hill with a perfect 12/12, while in the Average-150 section Hatch End edged out Pimlico on board points after both finished on 11/12 and the Average-120 was won by DHSS II with 100%.

The other big news from the capital is that the London League has finally scrapped adjournments and will now be played at a rate of 75 minutes for all the moves with a 15-second increment per move. The season just finished was blighted by leading club Drunken Knights no longer being able to play at the Plough, causing them to withdraw part way through the season. Meanwhile Wood Green continued on their merry way, winning all their matches en route to an amazing seventeenth consecutive Division One title, with Battersea second on 9½/11 and Richmond a further point in arrears.

The final round in Uppingham where City of London School (right) would continue their fine run of form by defeating Hampton School (left). Nearest the camera is Kalavannan vs Brozel.

UPPINGHAM – Supported by Winchester College, the finals of the ECF National Schools Chess Championship once again took place at Uppingham School (2-3 July). RGS Guildford averaged a whopping 195 over six boards, but were defeated on board count by City of London School, who only averaged 166. City won all four of their matches, including another board-count victory over 2018 Champions Reading School (average 176). Hampton School (average 180) came second after losing 4-2 to City in the final round, with Reading School, Royal Grammar School, Guildford and Royal Grammar School, Newcastle finishing third equal on 3/4.

Forthcoming Events

July 26 - August 4 **British Championships, Torquay**
www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk

August 1 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

August 3 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

August 10-11 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

August 11 **Richmond Rapidplay**
www.rjcc.org.uk

August 16-18 **Manchester Congress**
email: gmccacongress@yahoo.co.uk

August 16-18 **Thanet Congress, Broadstairs**
www.thanetchesscongress.co.uk

August 17-23 **Jessie Gilbert Festival**
www.ccfworld.com/Chess/; includes IM norm APA

August 18-26 **Mindsports Olympiad, Finchley**
msoworld.com; see too July's *Home News*

August 23-27 **Northumbria Masters, Newcastle**
www.northumbriamasters.com or call 07503 722366

August 24-26 **Leyland Congress**
congress.popmalc.org.uk/congress/43/home

August 24-26 **Ulster Championships, Belfast**
www.ulsterchess.org

Aug 30 - September 1 **English Women's Ch., Hull**
www.englishchess.org.uk/english-womens-championships-2019/

August 31 **Darnall & Handsworth Rapidplay**
Held in Sheffield; for more information: www.dhchessclub.co.uk

Aug 31 - September 7 **Paignton Congress**
www.dccapaigntonchess.com or call 07759 153996

And for the Online Connoisseur:

July 26 - August 2 **Grand Chess Tour Rapid & Blitz, Paris**
grandchesstour.com; Caruana, Giri, Nepomniachtchi, MVL

August 8-15 **GCT Rapid & Blitz, Saint Louis**
grandchesstour.com; Carlsen, Caruana, Ding Liren, MVL, etc.

August 16-30 **Sinquefield Cup, Saint Louis**
saintlouischessclub.org; Carlsen, Caruana, Nakamura, Nepo, So, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact Matt@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.

Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 18-20)

1) Flint-Lamb
The potential fork on e7 decides matters: **1 ♕xc6! 1-0**

2) Bosiocic-Gukesh
1...♖b4! 2 ♖f1 (a decisive overloading in view of 2 ♖xb4 f1♕) **2...♖xb6 3 ♖xf2 ♔e7 0-1**

3) Travadon-Gazik
Black has just blundered with ...♗b7-d5??, allowing a stalemate trick: **1 ♕xd3+! ♘xd3 ½-½**

4) Nepomniachtchi-Wei Yi
1 h4! ♕**f5** (1...♕xh4 2 ♘xg6 wins the exchange) **2 ♗c2 ♕xc2 3 ♖xc2 fxe5 4 dxe5 ♗g4 5 ♕d3 ♗f5 6 ♕d1 ♗xc2 7 ♕xc2** didn't give Black enough for the queen, White winning in a further 18 moves.

5) Muzychuk-Tan Zhongyi
1 ♗e6! (by far the simplest way to win, in view of 1...♖xe6 2 ♖xf8#) **1...h5 2 ♗f7 1-0**

6) Barrass-Hayes
With the Eagle and Child closing, the players agreed a draw in this sharp position, but **1 ♖xg7+! ♕xg7** (or 1...♔xg7 2 ♖g1+) **2 ♕xd8+ ♔h7** (2...♕f8 3 ♖g1+ also picks up the black queen) **3 ♖h1+ ♕h6 4 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 5 ♕f6+** would have won.

7) White-Surtees
1...♗h4! 0-1 White must give up his queen in view of 2 ♕d2 ♕f3+! 3 ♗f2 ♕g2+ 4 ♔e1 ♕g1#. 1...♕h1+ 2 ♕g1 ♕f3+! 3 ♕f2 ♕h3+ 4 ♔g1 ♗h4 also works.

8) Bu Xiangzhi-Jones
1...♘f3+! 2 gxf3 (or 2 ♕xf3 ♖xe1+) **2...♖g5+ 3 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 4 ♔e2 ♖g2** broke open the position while picking up the white queen.

9) Karjakin-So
Rather than the game's 1 ♖e2?, **1 ♖xf5!** would have won, and if **1...♗xh2+** (if 1...♖xf5 2 ♕xg4+ ♔h8 3 ♕xf5) **2 ♔h1!** (but not 2 ♔xh2?? ♕h4+ 3 ♔g1 ♖xf5) **2...♕h4? 3 ♖g5+ ♔h8 4 ♖xg4**.

10) Tuvsanaa-Lu Shanglei
1 ♘xg5! was crushing. Play concluded: **1...♘d8** (1...hxg5? allows a classic mate: 2 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 3 ♕h7#) **2 ♖xh6 ♔f8 3 ♘h7+ ♔e7 4 ♕xg7+ ♘f7 5 ♘g5 1-0**

11) Yu Yangyi-Ding Liren
1 ♗xg7! (the key breakthrough) **1...♔xg7 2 h6+ ♔h7 3 f6** (3 ♔f6 ♔xh6 4 ♔e7 also does the trick) **3...♔g8 4 ♔f5 ♗h5 5 ♔e5 ♗g6 6 ♔d6 ♔f8 7 ♔d7 ♗f5 8 h7 ♗xh7 9 e7+ ♔f7 10 e8♕+ ♔xf6 11 ♕h8+ ♔g6 12 ♔e7 ♔g5 13 ♕xh7 1-0**

12) Vigorito-Nestorovic
1 ♖xd4! ♕xd4 2 ♕f8+ ♔h7 3 ♕f5+ ♖g6 4 ♗d3 1-0 A killer pin, unlike 4 h5?? ♕xg4+.

13) Indjic-Puranik
1 ♘xf7! (the mundane 1 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 2 ♗xd5 ♕xd6 3 ♗xb7 also works) **1...♖f5** (1...♔xf7 2 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 3 ♗xd5+ wins Black's queen and 1...♘c7 2 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 3 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 4 c4 would be pretty hopeless for him) **2 ♘e5! 1-0**

14) Matlakov-Khanin
1 ♖xh7! (even stronger than 1 ♗a3 b4 2 cxb4) **1...♘xf6** (1...♔xh7 2 ♕h4+ ♔g8 3 ♗h6 ♕c5 4 ♗g7 mates) **2 ♖xf7!** (a killer blow) **2...♖d1+ 3 ♗f1 ♕xf7 4 ♖xf6 ♖f8 5 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 6 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 7 ♗a3+ 1-0**

(15) Lazov-Petrov
1 ♘xe7+! ♔h8 2 gxh5! (2 fxe5? ♗xh1 isn't so clear, but 2 ♖xh5+! gxh5 3 ♕h3 ♗e4 4 ♕xh5+ ♗h7 5 g6 fxg6 6 ♘xg6+ also wins, in view of 6...♘xg6 7 ♕xa5 and 6...♔g8 7 ♘e7+ ♔h8 8 ♗d3) **2...♗xh1 3 ♕h3 1-0** There's simply nothing to be done about the threats down the h-file.

16) Moss-Bolt
1 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 (1...♕xf7 2 ♘d6 is crushing too, as shown by 2...♕c7 3 ♖xb7 ♕a5 4 h4! ♕a6 5 ♕xg6 and 2...♕f8 3 ♖xb7 ♘a5 4 ♖f7) **2 ♘d6+ ♔g8 3 ♖xb7 ♕g5 4 ♕xc6 ♖f8 5 ♕c7 1-0**

17) Saric-Hovhannisyan
1 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 (1...♔xh7 2 ♘g5+ ♔g6 3 ♕e4+! forces mate: 3...♔xg5 4 ♖g3+ ♔h6 5 ♖h3+ ♔g5 6 ♖h7 ♘f4 7 h4+ ♔g4 8 f3+ ♔g3 9 ♕e1#) **2 ♕g3 g6? 3 ♘g5 ♖c3 4 ♕h4 1-0** Black must give up his queen in view of 4...♔g7 5 ♗g8!.

18) Carlsen-Hamann
1 f6! ♕xg1? (1...♖c7 was the last chance, although after 2 ♗h3 ♔h8 3 ♗e6 ♕f2 4 ♕g5 ♕f4+ 5 ♔b1 ♕xg5 6 hxg5 White's positional plusses should prove decisive) **2 ♗c4+! ♖xc4 3 ♖xg1 ♖xc3 4 ♖xg7+! 1-0**

19) Arnaudov-Van Kerkhof
The key idea is to drive the knight away from the h-pawn, such as with 1...♔f3! 2 ♘f5 (2 ♘f1 h4 3 ♔b2 ♘d1+ 4 ♔xa2 ♘e3 5 ♘h2+ ♔g3 is an easy win) 2...♘d5! when White is helpless after 3 ♔xa2 ♔g4 4 ♘d6 ♔f4 or 3 ♘h4+ ♔g3 4 ♘g6 ♘f4 5 ♘e7 ♔g4. Instead, matters concluded: **1...h4?? 2 ♘f5+ ♔g4 3 ♘xh4! ♔xh4 4 ♔b2 ♔g4 5 ♔a1** (there's no way to flush the king out of the corner) **5...♔f4 6 ♔b2 ♔e4 7 ♔a1 ♔d4 8 ♔b2 ♔c4 9 ♔a1 ♔b3 ½-½**

20) Meier-Vachier-Lagrave
As pointed out by Glenn Flear, White could have saved the game with 1 ♖d1!, and if 1...g3+ (1...♔e4 2 ♘h4 ♖h3 3 ♖e1+ ♔f4 4 ♘g2+ ♔f5 5 ♖a1 g3+ 6 ♔e2 also keeps Black at bay) 2 ♔e2 ♔e4 3 ♖d8 ♖b2+ 4 ♖d2 (this is why the rook had to initially go to d1) 4...♖xd2+ 5 ♔xd2 ♔f3 6 ♘e1+! ♔f2 7 ♘d3+ when the knight can cover the g-pawn's advance. Instead, the game ended instructively: **1 ♖a1? g3+ 2 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 3 ♔h1 ♖b2** (with his king in the corner and knight unable to move, White can no longer save the game) **4 ♖a5+ ♔e4 5 ♖a1 ♘d4 6 ♔g1 ♖f2 7 ♖a4 ♔e5 8 ♖a5+ ♔d6 9 ♖a6+ ♔c5 10 ♖a5+ ♔b4 11 ♖a1 ♔b3 12 ♖d1 ♘f3+ 13 ♔h1 ♔b2** (zugzwang) **14 ♖g1 ♘xg1 15 ♔xg1 ♔c3 16 ♘e3 ♔d3 17 ♘f1 ♔e2! 18 ♘xg3+ ♔f3 19 ♘f5 ♖d2 20 ♘h4+ ♔g3 21 ♘f5+ ♔g4 22 ♘e3+ ♔f3 23 ♘f5 ♖d5 24 ♘e7 ♖c5 0-1** Model technique from MVL.

21) Tan Zhongyi-Lagno
Black had produced this remarkable position with an ingenious rook sacrifice on a2 and in the game Lagno was quickly rewarded: **1 ♗c1+? ♔xa2 2 ♘f4 ♗xf4 3 ♗xf4 b3 0-1** However, 1 ♗xd6 cxd6 2 ♘e3! would have drawn (or 2 ♘h4!), and if 2...♔xa2 3 ♘f5 b3 4 ♘xd6 b2 5 ♘e4 when the d-pawn is fast enough to save White. Black has no more than a draw after, for instance, 5...♔b3 (and not 5...b1♕?? 6 ♘c3+ ♔b2 7 ♘xb1 ♔xb1 8 d6) 6 d6 ♔c2 7 d7 b1♕ 8 d8♕ ♕h1+ 9 ♔f4 ♕f1+.

22) Anand-Ding Liren
1 ♗xg7! (1 ♖xg6 fxg6 2 ♘xg7 seems to come up just short, as shown by 2...♕b8 3 ♕g5 ♖d6 4 ♖e1 d2! 5 ♕xd2 ♖e7, whereas after the text there's simply no defence) **1...♗xf5 2 ♕h6 ♖e6** (now a lovely little move concludes proceedings, but if 2...f6 3 ♖xg6!) **3 ♗h8! 1-0**

23) Wei Yi-Jinshi Bai
1 ♗xh7+! ♔f8 (1...♔xh7 2 ♕h5+ ♔g8 3 ♕xf7+ ♔h7 fails to 4 ♖e3, and if 4...♖xd7 5 ♖h3+ ♗h4 6 ♖xh4+ ♕h6 7 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 8 ♕xd7) **2 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 3 ♕h5+ ♔f8 4 ♗g6 1-0** Remarkably Black can stave off mate with 4...♖d1+ 5 ♖xd1 ♕e6, but 6 ♕h8+ ♕g8 7 ♕h3 followed by ♕d7 will be totally overwhelming.

24) Sasikiran-Artemiev
1 g5! (much more brutal than 1 ♘xh6+ gxh6 2 ♕xh6 ♕g7 3 ♘xb7) **1...fxg5 2 ♖d7!** (or just 2 ♖d6 followed by a deadly blow on h6) **2...♘xd7 3 ♘xh6+! gxh6** (3...♔f8 4 ♘e6+ wins the black queen for starters) **4 ♕e6+ ♔g7 5 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 6 ♕e6+ ♔g7** (Black is rook and bishop ahead, but has absolutely no answer to the rampant white forces) **7 ♕e7+ ♔g6 8 ♕h7+ ♔f6 9 ♘xd7+ ♔e6 10 ♕g6+! ♔d5 11 ♖d1# 1-0**

This Month's New Releases

The Sicilian Taimanov
Antonios Pavlidis, 480 pages
Quality Chess
RRP £22.50 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.25**

There is no doubt the Sicilian Defence is still one of the most popular and resilient ways of meeting 1 e4 at all levels of play. Even the world champion has now settled on 1...c5 as his main weapon. Before him, of course, Fischer and Kasparov were devoted to the defence almost to the point of excluding alternatives from their respective repertoires.

The three aforementioned champions preferred to utilise the Najdorf, Scheveningen and Sveshnikov variations rather than the subject of this new book, although those who are long in the tooth and young in the heart will remember Fischer switching to it to win the final game against Spassky back in 1972. Yet finding heroes of the Taimanov variation is not such an easy task. Apart from the eponymous grandmaster himself, other staunch adherents are harder to identify.

Pavlidis went through various spells playing the Dragon and then 1...e5 before working seriously on the Taimanov after becoming a grandmaster in 2014, before elevating it to his number one opening choice in 2015. In some respects it is an easier variation to get to grips with than the more illustrious lines of the Sicilian, as the author explains:

"In general, I regard the Sicilian Taimanov as an opening which can largely be played by understanding, without much need for long, forcing computer lines", although he admits that "A certain amount of memorization is required to play any opening against strong opposition, and the Taimanov is no exception."

Sensibly Pavlidis is also careful to warn against trying to cram in too much information: "For the great majority of readers, the longer lines of analysis may be of interest for their illustration of certain tactical resources, thematic piece manoeuvres and so on, but attempting to memorize every move would be unnecessary, and perhaps even counterproductive."

This book follows the move order of **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6**, rather than the more traditional 2...♘c6, which has the advantage of making 3 ♗b5 undesirable for White. The early deviations (5 a3, 5 g3, 5 c4, 5 ♗e3 and 5 ♘xc6) are dealt with first. None are up the task of troubling Black and neither is the older favourite of **5 ♘b5**, when **5...d6 6 ♗f4 e5** is currently in good shape for the second player. So much so in fact that White already has ways to go very wrong. For example, **7 ♗g5?** allows "Black the chance to make an excellent exchange sacrifice" with **7...♕xg5! 8 ♘c7+ ♔d8 9 ♘xa8 ♘f6!**.

This supplies "A lead in development and the initiative, plus good chances to trap the knight in the corner. White's position may already be objectively losing."

The bulk of the book covers those positions arising from 5 ♘c3 ♕c7, when a plethora of sixth moves come under scrutiny before attention is switched firmly to the main lines with 6 ♗e3. After 6...a6 one of the most testing moves is 7 ♗d3. This makes it difficult for Black to switch to a good Scheveningen position, as White's bishop is more actively placed on d3 than e2 and, according to the author, a quick attack is on the cards when White castles on the kingside and follows up with f4 and ♕f3.

Incidentally, it would be a mistake to think a positional battle is always the intention in the Taimanov. I was intrigued by all of the highly tactical middlegame positions on offer and how much of a different flavour they have compared to those often found in the Najdorf and the Dragon. It makes it look like a whole new world, where even strong opponents could very easily go astray due to unfamiliarity with the nuances. Here is one example:

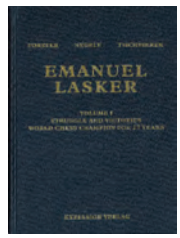
Black plays **17...f5!** when White's best reply is 18 exf6. 18 ♘g5 is another option, which "May appear tempting, but the tactics work well for Black after 18...♗xg2! 19 ♖h2 ♗d5 [...] Black is simply threatening to play ...a5 and carry out his attack on the queenside." White can now try the forcing 20 h5, but after 20...♘xf4! 21 ♕xf4 d6 "Black only has two pawns for the piece, but his position looks dominant while White's pieces seem uncoordinated and weirdly placed."

That shows how difficult these positions can be, especially when one considers 18...♗xg2! is a novelty still waiting to be uncorked over the board.

The author clearly believes in the power of the Taimanov. "I cannot think of a better Sicilian variation for a practical player than the Taimanov. It blends a number of the positive features of other Sicilians: excellent theoretical soundness, a flexible pawn structure and dynamic counterattacking prospects."

Yes, there is still a lot to learn if one wants to play the Taimanov in tournaments, but anyone with the time and commitment to indulge in some serious preparation should be able to forge a reliable pet defence from the material offered in this deep book.

Sean Marsh



Emanuel Lasker: Volume 1
Richard Forster, Michael Negele & Raj Tischbierek, 450 pages
Exzelsior Verlag
RRP £54.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £49.45**

Back in 2009 there appeared a massive, 1,097 page biography on the second world champion: *Emanuel Lasker — Denker, Weltenbürger, Schachweltmeister*, but, sadly, that was published only in German. Fortunately, a whole decade on, we now have the first of three volumes from the same publisher, available in English, to bring this important work to a wider audience.

Subtitled 'Struggle and Victories: World Champion for 27 Years,' this fabulous volume packs in an extraordinary amount of material, of which a significant amount will be new even to long-term Lasker aficionados. The next two volumes are already in the pipeline, but the full set will not be available until 2021

– 80 years (to the very day, if the plan comes to fruition) after the death of the great champion.

Production values are well to the fore, with the book enjoying a fine blue hardcover adorned with golden text, high-quality paper, an abundance of photographs, of which only some will be familiar to readers, a bibliography running to six pages, and a general index of seven pages. There have clearly not been any corners cut here, in any department, nor have any stones been left unturned when it comes to the actual content.

It has long been common sport to highlight inaccuracies in Jacques Hannak's standard biography, *Emanuel Lasker – The Life of a Chess Master*, but here Negele offers a reappraisal: "From a present-day perspective, however, Hannak has authored a valuable book given the circumstances of the time." Another area of contention has always centred on whether or not Edward Lasker was related to Emanuel and this is also addressed here.

There are significant contributions from several authors in addition to the three editors. To name but two, Tony Gillam writes about Lasker in Great Britain and John Hilbert covers 'American Views', which should be quite enough to give an indication as to the quality of the writing.

Naturally, Lasker's title matches are given plenty of space and the games are replete with instructive annotations. Raj Tischbierek's chapter on the Lasker-Tarrasch rivalry is a particular highlight of the book. When he states that "In the history of championship chess there is only one great match for which the chess world had to wait 16 years: the battle for the world championship between Emanuel Lasker and Siegbert Tarrasch" it makes for a thought-provoking moment. Imagine if we had waited 16 years for Karpov and Kasparov to play their first match, with doubts all the way as to who was the better player.

Unfortunately for Tarrasch, Lasker knew how to "play the man" a little too well. Exploiting Tarrasch's "correctness" allowed him to win the match by the convincing score of eight wins to three (with five draws). Tarrasch, as I have noted before, is still consistently underrated by the English-speaking chess community, but it is important to remember he was a very fine player and Lasker's resounding victory was typical of his style in match play.

Excellent use is made of annotations from a variety of sources to bring the games to life.

S.Tarrasch-E.Lasker
World Championship (Game 2), Düsseldorf 1908

Lasker played an oft-criticised move here in **14...♘g4?**. Tarrasch dubbed it "an oversight", but Lasker claimed "I decided to allow a ferocious attack against my castled position and to seek in other aspects of the position for compensation." If it is a blunder, it is an obvious one, but Lasker's alternative explanation sounds unlikely too. The point is that after **15 ♗xg7! ♘xf2** (15...♔xg7 16 ♘f5+ and ♕xg4 is clearly untenable) **16 ♔xf2 ♔xg7 17 ♘f5+ ♔h8 18 ♕d4+ f6 19 ♕xa7 ♗f8 20 ♕d4 ♖e5** Lasker eventually managed to muddy the waters enough to be able to drown Tarrasch and sail to a 2-0 advantage in the match.

Instead, 16 ♕d4! ♘g4 17 ♘f5 would have been extremely strong for White. As Lasker put it, "If he had with bold daring, as it was with Pillsbury's and also Steinitz's nature, eschewed the small material advantage to embark on the sea of the generous attacking combination – he probably would have achieved victory."

Elsewhere in the book manifold parts of Lasker's personality and achievements away from practical play are examined, such as his chess studies and his love of mathematics. It all helps to shine a light on a truly enigmatic and undoubtedly extremely smart man.

This is an excellent book which will undoubtedly stand the test of time to remain as a very important source for anyone seeking to try and understand the life, games and personality of the most remarkable of all chess characters. Any self-respecting chess historian needs this book on their shelves. I recommend finding some quiet time, putting up your feet and losing yourself to the chess world of a former time that has been brilliantly brought back to life by this magnificent labour of love.

Sean Marsh

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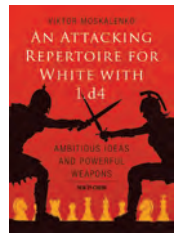


An Attacking Repertoire for White with 1.d4
Victor Moskalenko, 368 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

We have become used to Moskalenko's ever lively and thought-provoking books tending to examine openings from Black's perspective, such as the Budapest, Dutch and French. However, he also likes to be aggressive when White and here presents a 1 d4 and 2 c4 repertoire designed to take the fight to the opponent from the word go. Unsurprisingly Moskalenko favourites the Four Pawns Attack against the King's Indian, 4 f3 versus the Nimzo-Indian and the Exchange Queen's Gambit are all bedrocks of the repertoire, which also features the Exchange Slav and an early ♗d2 against the Grünfeld.

Chess Informant 140
Sahovski Informator, 350 pages, paperback
RRP £32.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.61**

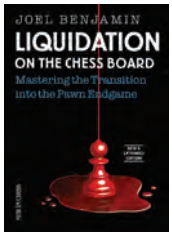
Entitled 'Generations', the latest *Informator* features reports from the Moscow Grand Prix, the Gashimov Memorial and the European Individual, with contributors including Vladislav Artemiev and David Navara. There is also a special feature on the Sicilian Scheveningen, as well as all the latest novelties, instructive endgames and studies.

As usual for an issue of *Chess Informant*, if you'd also like to receive a CD of the material, please add £10 to the cost of your order, or if you only want the CD, that is available too from Chess & Bridge for just £9.99 (Subscribers – £8.99).

ChessBase Magazine 190
ChessBase PC-DVD
RRP £16.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £15.25**

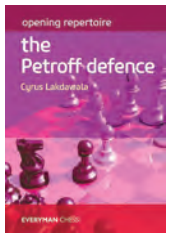
The latest *CBM* is for 'July/August 2019' and focusses especially on the GRENKE Chess Classic. Both Fabiano Caruana and Carlsen's

no.2, Peter Heine Nielsen, supply annotations, while there are also all the usual features, including several opening surveys and videos, as well as Karsten Müller on some instructive endgames.



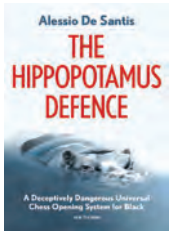
Liquidation on the Chess Board
Joel Benjamin, 304 pages, paperback
RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

This is a 'new and extended' edition of the Chess Journalists of America 2015 choice as book of the year. Benjamin's focus is very much on how one can realise when it's time to liquidate into a pawn endgame. He also provides much interesting material on pawn endgames themselves, while adding 50 new examples in this second edition.



Opening Repertoire: The Petroff Defence
Cyrus Lakdawala, 304 pages, paperback
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

There can be no doubt that Cyrus Lakdawala is a hard worker. His latest work for Everyman covers the solid Petroff Defence, an opening which Lakdawala believes is underemployed at club level. As ever, he is particularly strong when presenting the key ideas and model games, but that does not mean there are no new ideas within waiting to be played. The Petroff might be very solid, but it can also allow Black to counterattack as Lakdawala demonstrates.

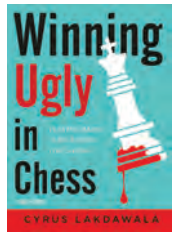


The Hippopotamus Defence
Alessio de Santis, paperback, 320 pages
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The Hippo sees Black set up with a double fianchetto followed by placing his knights on d7 and e7. Flexibility is his watchword and while the opening has slowly gained adherents over the past decade, it remains fairly neglected by theory and might be a good weapon for the creative club player. The author, an Italian FM, presents both the main ideas behind Black's approach and the key moves to remember, while suggesting that the Hippo can be played no matter what White's choice of first move.

The Shining Sveshnikov Sicilian
Erwin L'Ami, PC-DVD; running time: 8 hours
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 has arguably never been more topical and it's no surprise to see ChessBase commissioning a leading theoretician to present an up-to-date repertoire with it for Black. Throughout L'Ami does a good job of highlighting the key motifs for both sides, but his main job is covering all the theory which Black needs to know to meet both 7 ♗g5 and the trendy 7 ♘d5. Thankfully L'Ami has sensibly included a number of interactive tests at the end of the DVD, not least some very handy "memory markers".



Winning Ugly in Chess
Cyrus Lakdawala, paperback, 336 pages
RRP £20.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

New in Chess have certainly been busy of late, releasing Lakdawala's latest work on top of those by de Santis and Moskalenko. Subtitled 'Playing Badly is No Excuse for Losing', Lakdawala reminds us that winning is the key goal in chess, not just good moves. Drawing largely on his own games and those of his students, Lakdawala discusses such topics as how to set up cheapos and how to cling on in complex but bad positions. Sometimes the 'wrong player' does win a game, but by studying this work the reader is more likely to become that lucky winner.

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A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Tarjei J. Svensen - @TarjeiJS
"The World Champion strikes again!", as @thelittlehat put it. Carlsen outplays Giri convincingly and starts Croatia #GrandChessTour with a win, his 69th game without a loss.

Olimpiu G. Urcan - @olimpiuurcan
Wesley So's incredible admission: "It feels like second place is already a victory whenever he [Carlsen] is playing right now because he's like Bobby Fischer back in the 1970s or 1960s. Whenever he's playing in a championship, the others are just playing for the second place."

Grand Chess Tour - @GrandChessTour
Mamedyarov: "Against Magnus I never think about draw, because when you think about draw you lose. If you think about win, you can do draw. You need to think about more." #GrandChessTour

Garry Kasparov - @Kasparov63
Congrats to Magnus on another impressive victory. Records are meant to be broken! And to the Croatian organizers, the Grand Chess Tour and all the players for a tremendous fighting event. Classical chess is alive & well in the right hands!

Anish Giri - @anishgiri
The chess world is a better place when Vishy Anand holds a worse endgame against Magnus Carlsen. #icons #GCT

2700chess - @2700chess
Meet 18 y/o Jeffery Xiong the youngest member of the 2700 club! He was equal first with 7.5/9 at the World Open in Philadelphia that finished this Sunday.

ECF - @ecfchess
Spread the word! The English Women's Championships 2019 – 30th August to 1st September at The Royal Hull Hotel. Total Prize Fund – £3000 and the winner will also qualify for a place in the England women's team in the 2020 Olympiad.

Saunders on Chess

Follow me on Twitter: @johnchess or email: johns@chess.co.uk

As we left things last month, Magnus Carlsen had just scored yet another success in the Altibox Norway tournament. Since then I've been cruising round the islands of Scotland, as far as St Kilda, the Orkneys and the Shetlands, pointing my camera at eagles and sea birds. My closest contact with chess was to see some of the original Lewis chess men in the museum at Stornoway and some giant-sized replicas at the ferry terminal.

On my return I learnt that our latter-day Viking warrior had proceeded to pillage Croatia on the Grand Chess Tour. He was particularly merciless towards a couple of players who have dared to take points off him in recent years, starting with a 23-move demolition of Anish Giri and ending with a slightly longer but almost effortless win against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. In the middle of the tournament there were three consecutive wins against Nakamura, Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren, making it a staggering '+5' against a matchless field of rivals.

Chess journalists are running out of superlatives to describe Magnus's latest run of success. Some focus on the possibility of him breaking his rating record, but I confess this leaves me cold since I consider discussions of ratings to be one of the two most tedious topics in all of chess (the other being discussions of Swiss pairings).

I couldn't care less if Carlsen breaks 2900 since, even if he does, it doesn't prove in itself that he is a greater player than the big names of the past. However, having said which, like everyone else, I can't help making comparisons between players of the here and now and those who went before. It's not so much about making straight comparisons between players, since all the top players have had good and bad spells, but comparisons between players' hot streaks are fascinating.

Perhaps the most famous hot streak was Bobby Fischer and his blistering form from the time he came back to chess in 1970 up to his match with Spassky in 1972. That was an electrifying period of chess for all of us who were privileged to be around at the time, scanning the newspapers for his latest exploits. Then there was the rise of Karpov and, around the same time, the 'second coming' of Tal as he went on a long run of successes in the mid-1970s (though it didn't amount to anything in terms of world championship success).

A number of chess legends have gone on one of these incredible runs in the lead-up to winning the world championship, but it is less common for players to maintain or raise their form after winning the title. For example, Petrosian went off the boil after wresting the crown from Botvinnik. Spassky did a little better, but Karpov was a much more successful tournament competitor than any of his Soviet predecessors, at least until the gruelling matches with Kasparov took the edge off his game.

As well as Karpov, it strikes me that the three champions who went on the most impressive runs of form after becoming world champion were Alekhine, Kasparov and Carlsen. In Alekhine's case I'm thinking of his form in the early 1930s, making huge scores at San Remo in 1930 and Bled in 1931 and generally dominating his rivals. Of course, the much-hoped-for rematch with Capablanca never happened, but my feeling is that Alekhine would have prevailed at that time. Without any disrespect to Euwe, who played brilliantly to win the 1935 title match and had a generally excellent record against the champion, Alekhine was not the force in 1935 that he had been a few years earlier.

I think the current prize for maintaining a hot streak longer than anyone else in the modern era must go to Kasparov. His dominance arguably started around the late 1980s when he finally out-muscled Karpov and it lasted until losing his title to Kramnik, or maybe a little longer, since Kasparov's post-2000 form was rather better than Kramnik's. Let's call it 15 years. That's a very long time. Of course, his hot streak wasn't as incandescently hot as Fischer's or Alekhine's, but it went on for so much longer, against tip-top opposition, and with only a few blips along the way.

So Kasparov is probably Carlsen's main historical rival when it comes to hot streaks. The Norwegian is up to around six years now, also with a couple of unconvincing patches, so he has a way to go yet. This reminds me that Carlsen took some coaching from Kasparov a few years back – more or less the whole of the calendar year 2009. The upshot of their collaboration seemed to be that Carlsen decided to play 'theory-lite' openings followed by a long endgame grind. It was more Capablanca/Karpov than Alekhine/Kasparov, and one could hardly imagine it being the recommended Kasparov approach.

One pictures Kasparov emphasising the importance of intensive opening preparation and trying to impose oneself on the opponent as early as possible in the game. That, of course, would have put a premium on considerable preparatory work necessitating the use (and management) of assistants. Carlsen may have baulked at that at the time, but it's starting to look as though he switched to the Kasparov approach in the run-up to the Caruana match and that it is starting to reap rewards in the period following the London 2018 match. Maybe Garry was right after all. What's the Russian for "I told you so"?

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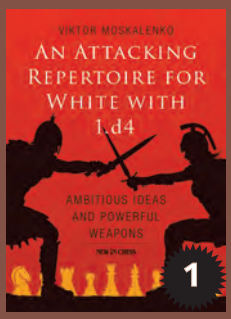

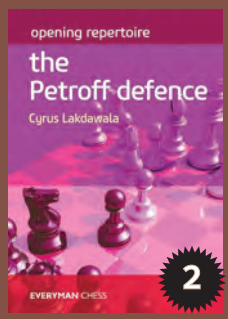

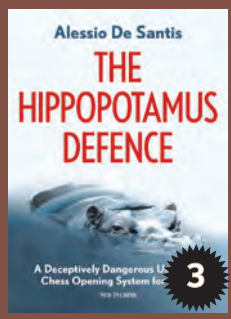

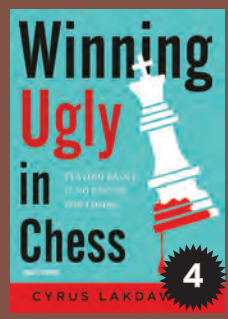

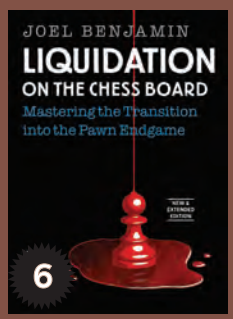

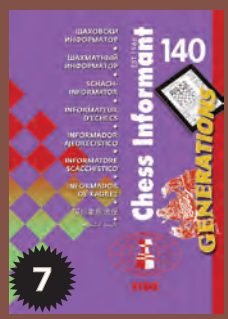

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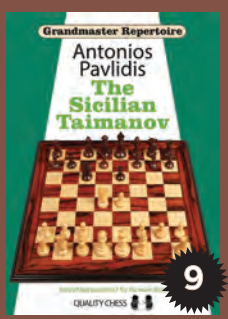

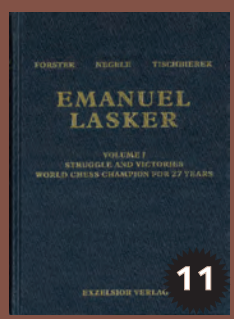

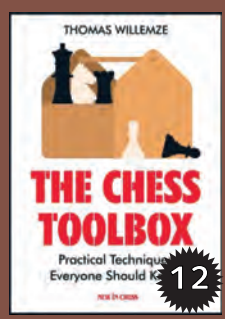

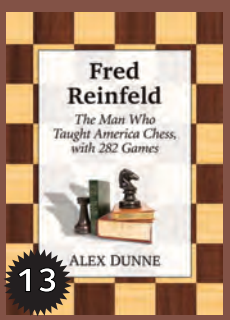

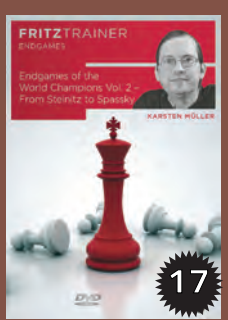

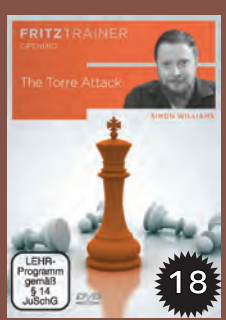

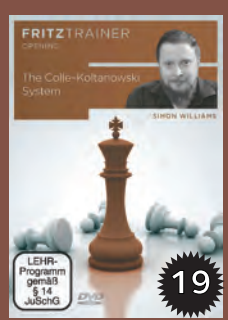

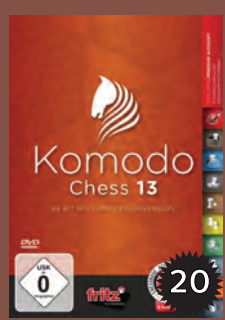

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